REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

Large-Paper Edition

THE WRITINGS

OF

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

VOLUME III

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Boston Public Library

https://archive.org/details/marjoriedawother00aldr_3

Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

MARJORIE DAW AND OTHER STORIES

BY

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

CAMBRIDGE
Printed at the Riverside Press
MDCCCXCVII

COPYRIGHT, 1873, 1885, 1893, 1897
BY THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Two Hundred and Fifty Copies
Printed. Number.....

CONTENTS

	PAGE
MARJORIE DAW	1
MISS MEHETABEL'S SON	45
A MIDNIGHT FANTASY	82
MADEMOISELLE OLYMPE ZABRISKI	116
A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE	139
QUITE SO	158
TWO BITES AT A CHERRY	181
GOLIATH	226
THE CHEVALIER DE RESSEGUIER	244
HER DYING WORDS	272
PÈRE ANTOINE'S DATE-PALM	294

The frontispiece is from a recent photograph of Mr. Aldrich taken by G. C. Cox, of New York.

MARJORIE DAW

I

DR. DILLON TO EDWARD DELANEY, ESQ., AT THE PINES, NEAR RYE, N. H.

August 8, 1872

My dear Sir: I am happy to assure you that your anxiety is without reason. Flemming will be confined to the sofa for three or four weeks, and will have to be careful at first how he uses his leg. A fracture of this kind is always a tedious affair. Fortunately the bone was very skilfully set by the surgeon who chanced to be in the drug-store where Flemming was brought after his fall, and I apprehend no permanent inconvenience from the accident. *Flemming is doing perfectly well physically;* but I must confess that the irritable and morbid state of mind into which he has fallen causes me a great deal of uneasiness. He is the last man in the world who ought to break his leg. You know how impetuous our friend

is ordinarily, what a soul of restlessness and energy, never content unless he is rushing at some object, like a sportive bull at a red shawl; but amiable withal. He is no longer amiable. His temper has become something frightful. Miss Fanny Flemming came up from Newport, where the family are staying for the summer, to nurse him; but he packed her off the next morning in tears. He has a complete set of Balzac's works, twenty-seven volumes, piled up near his sofa, one of which he threatens to throw at Watkins whenever that exemplary serving-man appears with his meals. Yesterday I very innocently brought Flemming a small basket of lemons. You know it was a strip of lemon-peel on the curbstone that caused our friend's mischance. Well, he no sooner set his eyes upon those lemons than he fell into such a rage as I cannot adequately describe. This is only one of his moods, and the least distressing. At other times he sits with bowed head regarding his splintered limb, silent, sullen, despairing. When this fit is on him — and it sometimes lasts all day — nothing can distract his melancholy. He refuses to eat, does not even read the newspapers; books, except as projectiles for Watkins, have no charms for him. His state is truly pitiable.

Now, if he were a poor man, with a family

depending on his daily labor, this irritability and despondency would be natural enough. But in a young fellow of twenty-four, with plenty of money and seemingly not a care in the world, the thing is monstrous. If he continues to give way to his vagaries in this manner, he will end by bringing on an inflammation of the fibula. It was the fibula he broke. I am at my wits' end to know what to prescribe for him. I have anæsthetics and lotions, to make people sleep and to soothe pain; but I 've no medicine that will make a man have a little common sense. That is beyond my skill, but may be it is not beyond yours. You are Flemming's intimate friend, his *fidus Achates*. Write to him, write to him frequently, distract his mind, cheer him up, and prevent him from becoming a confirmed case of melancholia. Perhaps he has some important plans disarranged by his present confinement. If he has you will know, and will know how to advise him judiciously. I trust your father finds the change beneficial? I am, my dear sir, with great respect, etc.

II

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING, WEST 38TH STREET, NEW YORK

August 9, 1872

My dear Jack: I had a line from Dillon this morning, and was rejoiced to learn that your hurt is not so bad as reported. Like a certain personage, you are not so black and blue as you are painted. Dillon will put you on your pins again in two or three weeks, if you will only have patience and follow his counsels. Did you get my note of last Wednesday? I was greatly troubled when I heard of the accident.

I can imagine how tranquil and saintly you are with your leg in a trough! It is deuced awkward, to be sure, just as we had promised ourselves a glorious month together at the seaside; but we must make the best of it. It is unfortunate, too, that my father's health renders it impossible for me to leave him. I think he has much improved; the sea air is his native element; but he still needs my arm to lean

upon in his walks, and requires some one more careful than a servant to look after him. I cannot come to you, dear Jack, but I have hours of unemployed time on hand, and I will write you a whole post-office full of letters, if that will divert you. Heaven knows, I have n't anything to write about. It is n't as if we were living at one of the beach houses ; then I could do you some character studies, and fill your imagination with groups of sea-goddesses, with their (or somebody else's) raven and blonde manes hanging down their shoulders. You should have Aphrodite in morning wrapper, in evening costume, and in her prettiest bathing suit. But we are far from all that here. We have rooms in a farm-house, on a cross-road, two miles from the hotels, and lead the quietest of lives.

I wish I were a novelist. This old house, with its sanded floors and high wainscots, and its narrow windows looking out upon a cluster of pines that turn themselves into æolian harps every time the wind blows, would be the place in which to write a summer romance. It should be a story with the odors of the forest and the breath of the sea in it. It should be a novel like one of that Russian fellow's — what 's his name ? — Tourguénieff, Turguenef, Turgenif, Toorguniff, Turgénjew — nobody knows how

to spell him. Yet I wonder if even a Liza or an Alexandra Paulovna could stir the heart of a man who has constant twinges in his leg. I wonder if one of our own Yankee girls of the best type, haughty and *spirituelle*, would be of any comfort to you in your present deplorable condition. If I thought so, I would hasten down to the Surf House and catch one for you; or, better still, I would find you one over the way.

Picture to yourself a large white house just across the road, nearly opposite our cottage. It is not a house, but a mansion, built, perhaps, in the colonial period, with rambling extensions, and gambrel roof, and a wide piazza on three sides — a self-possessed, high-bred piece of architecture, with its nose in the air. It stands back from the road, and has an obsequious retinue of fringed elms and oaks and weeping willows. Sometimes in the morning, and oftener in the afternoon, when the sun has withdrawn from that part of the mansion, a young woman appears on the piazza with some mysterious Penelope web of embroidery in her hand, or a book. There is a hammock over there — of pineapple fibre, it looks from here. A hammock is very becoming when one is eighteen, and has golden hair, and dark eyes, and an emerald-colored illusion dress looped up after

the fashion of a Dresden china shepherdess, and is *chaussée* like a belle of the time of Louis Quatorze. All this splendor goes into that hammock, and sways there like a pond-lily in the golden afternoon. The window of my bedroom looks down on that piazza — and so do I.

But enough of this nonsense, which ill becomes a sedate young attorney taking his vacation with an invalid father. Drop me a line, dear Jack, and tell me how you really are. State your case. Write me a long, quiet letter. If you are violent or abusive, I 'll take the law to you.

III

JOHN FLEMMING TO EDWARD DELANEY

August 11, 1872

YOUR letter, dear Ned, was a godsend. Fancy what a fix I am in — I, who never had a day's sickness since I was born. My left leg weighs three tons. It is embalmed in spices and smothered in layers of fine linen, like a mummy. I can't move. I have n't moved for five thousand years. I 'm of the time of Pharaoh.

I lie from morning till night on a lounge, staring into the hot street. Everybody is out of town enjoying himself. The brown-stone-front houses across the street resemble a row of particularly ugly coffins set up on end. A green mould is settling on the names of the deceased, carved on the silver door-plates. Sardonic spiders have sewed up the key-holes. All is silence and dust and desolation. — I interrupt this a moment, to take a shy at Watkins with the second volume of César Birotteau. Missed him ! I think I could bring him down with a

copy of Sainte-Beuve or the Dictionnaire Universel, if I had it. These small Balzac books somehow do not quite fit my hand; but I shall fetch him yet. I 've an idea that Watkins is tapping the old gentleman's Château Yquem. Duplicate key of the wine-cellar. Hibernian swarries in the front basement. Young Cheops up-stairs, snug in his cerements. Watkins glides into my chamber, with that colorless, hypocritical face of his drawn out long like an accordion; but I know he grins all the way down-stairs, and is glad I have broken my leg. Was not my evil star in the very zenith when I ran up to town to attend that dinner at Delmonico's? I did n't come up altogether for that. It was partly to buy Frank Livingstone's roan mare Margot. And now I shall not be able to sit in the saddle these two months. I 'll send the mare down to you at The Pines — is that the name of the place?

Old Dillon fancies that I have something on my mind. He drives me wild with lemons. Lemons for a mind diseased! Nonsense. I am only as restless as the devil under this confinement — a thing I 'm not used to. Take a man who has never had so much as a headache or a toothache in his life, strap one of his legs in a section of water-spout, keep him in a room in the city for weeks, with the hot weather turned

on, and then expect him to smile and purr and be happy! It is preposterous. I can't be cheerful or calm.

Your letter is the first consoling thing I have had since my disaster, ten days ago. It really cheered me up for half an hour. Send me a screed, Ned, as often as you can, if you love me. Anything will do. Write me more about that little girl in the hammock. That was very pretty, all that about the Dresden china shepherdess and the pond-lily; the imagery a little mixed, perhaps, but very pretty. I did n't suppose you had so much sentimental furniture in your upper story. It shows how one may be familiar for years with the reception-room of his neighbor, and never suspect what is directly under his mansard. I supposed your loft stuffed with dry legal parchments, mortgages, and affidavits; you take down a package of manuscript, and lo! there are lyrics and sonnets and canzonettas. You really have a graphic descriptive touch, Edward Delaney, and I suspect you of anonymous love-tales in the magazines.

I shall be a bear until I hear from you again. Tell me all about your pretty *inconnue* across the road. What is her name? Who is she? Who 's her father? Where 's her mother? Who 's her lover? You cannot imagine how this will occupy me. The more trifling, the

better. My imprisonment has weakened me intellectually to such a degree that I find your epistolary gifts quite considerable. I am passing into my second childhood. In a week or two I shall take to India-rubber rings and prongs of coral. A silver cup, with an appropriate inscription, would be a delicate attention on your part. In the meantime, write!

IV

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 12, 1872

THE sick pasha shall be amused. *Bismillah!* he wills it so. If the story-teller becomes prolix and tedious — the bow-string and the sack, and two Nubians to drop him into the Piscataqua! But truly, Jack, I have a hard task. There is literally nothing here — except the little girl over the way. She is swinging in the hammock at this moment. It is to me compensation for many of the ills of life to see her now and then put out a small kid boot, which fits like a glove, and set herself going. Who is she, and what is her name? Her name is Daw. Only daughter of Mr. Richard W. Daw, ex-colonel and banker. Mother dead. One brother at Harvard, elder brother killed at the battle of Fair Oaks, ten years ago. Old, rich family, the Daws. This is the homestead, where father and daughter pass eight months of the twelve; the rest of the year in Baltimore and Washington. The New England

winter too many for the old gentleman. The daughter is called Marjorie — Marjorie Daw. Sounds odd at first, does n't it? But after you say it over to yourself half a dozen times, you like it. There 's a pleasing quaintness to it, something prim and pansy-like. Must be a nice sort of girl to be called Marjorie Daw.

I had mine host of The Pines in the witness-box last night, and drew the foregoing testimony from him. He has charge of Mr. Daw's vegetable-garden, and has known the family these thirty years. Of course I shall make the acquaintance of my neighbors before many days. It will be next to impossible for me not to meet Mr. Daw or Miss Daw in some of my walks. The young lady has a favorite path to the sea-beach. I shall intercept her some morning, and touch my hat to her. Then the princess will bend her fair head to me with courteous surprise not unmixed with haughtiness. Will snub me, in fact. All this for thy sake, O Pasha of the Snapt Axle-tree! . . . How oddly things fall out! Ten minutes ago I was called down to the parlor — you know the kind of parlors in farm-houses on the coast, a sort of amphibious parlor, with sea-shells on the mantelpiece and spruce branches in the chimney-place — where I found my father and Mr. Daw doing the antique polite to each other. He had come

to pay his respects to his new neighbors. Mr. Daw is a tall, slim gentleman of about fifty-five, with a florid face and snow-white mustache and side-whiskers. Looks like Mr. Dombey, or as Mr. Dombey would have looked if he had served a few years in the British Army. Mr. Daw was a colonel in the late war, commanding the regiment in which his son was a lieutenant. Plucky old boy, backbone of New Hampshire granite. Before taking his leave, the colonel delivered himself of an invitation as if he were issuing a general order. Miss Daw has a few friends coming, at 4 P. M., to play croquet on the lawn (parade-ground) and have tea (cold rations) on the piazza. Will we honor them with our company? (or be sent to the guard-house.) My father declines on the plea of ill-health. My father's son bows with as much suavity as he knows, and accepts.

In my next I shall have something to tell you. I shall have seen the little beauty face to face. I have a presentiment, Jack, that this Daw is a *rara avis!* Keep up your spirits, my boy, until I write you another letter — and send me along word how 's your leg.

V

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 13, 1872

THE party, my dear Jack, was as dreary as possible. A lieutenant of the navy, the rector of the Episcopal church at Stillwater, and a society swell from Nahant. The lieutenant looked as if he had swallowed a couple of his buttons, and found the bullion rather indigestible; the rector was a pensive youth, of the daffydowndilly sort; and the swell from Nahant was a very weak tidal wave indeed. The women were much better, as they always are; the two Miss Kingsburys of Philadelphia, staying at the Sea-shell House, two bright and engaging girls. But Marjorie Daw!

The company broke up soon after tea, and I remained to smoke a cigar with the colonel on the piazza. It was like seeing a picture, to see Miss Marjorie hovering around the old soldier, and doing a hundred gracious little things for him. She brought the cigars and lighted the tapers with her own delicate fingers, in the

most enchanting fashion. As we sat there, she came and went in the summer twilight, and seemed, with her white dress and pale gold hair, like some lovely phantom that had sprung into existence out of the smoke-wreaths. If she had melted into air, like the statue of Galatea in the play, I should have been more sorry than surprised.

It was easy to perceive that the old colonel worshipped her, and she him. I think the relation between an elderly father and a daughter just blooming into womanhood the most beautiful possible. There is in it a subtile sentiment that cannot exist in the case of mother and daughter, or that of son and mother. But this is getting into deep water.

I sat with the Daws until half past ten, and saw the moon rise on the sea. The ocean, that had stretched motionless and black against the horizon, was changed by magic into a broken field of glittering ice, interspersed with marvellous silvery fjords. In the far distance the Isles of Shoals loomed up like a group of huge bergs drifting down on us. The Polar Regions in a June thaw! It was exceedingly fine. What did we talk about? We talked about the weather — and *you!* The weather has been disagreeable for several days past — and so have you. I glided from one topic to the

other very naturally. I told my friends of your accident; how it had frustrated all our summer plans, and what our plans were. I played quite a spirited solo on the fibula. Then I described you; or, rather, I did n't. I spoke of your amiability, of your patience under this severe affliction; of your touching gratitude when Dillon brings you little presents of fruit; of your tenderness to your sister Fanny, whom you would not allow to stay in town to nurse you, and how you heroically sent her back to Newport, preferring to remain alone with Mary, the cook, and your man Watkins, to whom, by the way, you were devotedly attached. If you had been there, Jack, you would n't have known yourself. I should have excelled as a criminal lawyer, if I had not turned my attention to a different branch of jurisprudence.

Miss Marjorie asked all manner of leading questions concerning you. It did not occur to me then, but it struck me forcibly afterwards, that she evinced a singular interest in the conversation. When I got back to my room, I recalled how eagerly she leaned forward, with her full, snowy throat in strong moonlight, listening to what I said. Positively, I think I made her like you!

Miss Daw is a girl whom you would like immensely, I can tell you that. A beauty with-

out affectation, a high and tender nature — if one can read the soul in the face. And the old colonel is a noble character, too.

I am glad that the Daws are such pleasant persons. The Pines is an isolated spot, and my resources are few. I fear I should have found life here somewhat monotonous before long, with no other society than that of my excellent sire. It is true, I might have made a target of the defenceless invalid; but I have n't a taste for artillery, *moi.*

VI

JOHN FLEMMING TO EDWARD DELANEY

August 17, 1872

For a man who has n't a taste for artillery, it occurs to me, my friend, you are keeping up a pretty lively fire on my inner works. But go on. Cynicism is a small brass field-piece that eventually bursts and kills the artilleryman.

You may abuse me as much as you like, and I 'll not complain; for I don't know what I should do without your letters. They are curing me. I have n't hurled anything at Watkins since last Sunday, partly because I have grown more amiable under your teaching, and partly because Watkins captured my ammunition one night, and carried it off to the library. He is rapidly losing the habit he had acquired of dodging whenever I rub my ear, or make any slight motion with my right arm. He is still suggestive of the wine-cellar, however. You may break, you may shatter Watkins, if you will, but the scent of the Roederer will hang round him still.

Ned, that Miss Daw must be a charming person. I should certainly like her. I like her already. When you spoke in your first letter of seeing a young girl swinging in a hammock under your chamber window, I was somehow strangely drawn to her. I cannot account for it in the least. What you have subsequently written of Miss Daw has strengthened the impression. You seem to be describing a woman I have known in some previous state of existence, or dreamed of in this. Upon my word, if you were to send me her photograph, I believe I should recognize her at a glance. Her manner, that listening attitude, her traits of character, as you indicate them, the light hair and the dark eyes — they are all familiar things to me. Asked a lot of questions, did she? Curious about me? That is strange.

You would laugh in your sleeve, you wretched old cynic, if you knew how I lie awake nights, with my gas turned down to a star, thinking of The Pines and the house across the road. How cool it must be down there! I long for the salt smell in the air. I picture the colonel smoking his cheroot on the piazza. I send you and Miss Daw off on afternoon rambles along the beach. Sometimes I let you stroll with her under the elms in the moonlight, for you are great friends by this time, I take it, and see each other every

day. I know your ways and your manners! Then I fall into a truculent mood, and would like to destroy somebody. Have you noticed anything in the shape of a lover hanging around the colonial Lares and Penates? Does that lieutenant of the horse-marines or that young Stillwater parson visit the house much? Not that I am pining for news of them, but any gossip of the kind would be in order. I wonder, Ned, you don't fall in love with Miss Daw. I am ripe to do it myself. Speaking of photographs, could n't you manage to slip one of her *cartes de visite* from her album — she must have an album, you know — and send it to me? I will return it before it could be missed. That 's a good fellow! Did the mare arrive safe and sound? It will be a capital animal this autumn for Central Park.

Oh — my leg? I forgot about my leg. It 's better.

VII

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 20, 1872

You are correct in your surmises. I am on the most friendly terms with our neighbors. The colonel and my father smoke their afternoon cigar together in our sitting-room or on the piazza opposite, and I pass an hour or two of the day or the evening with the daughter. I am more and more struck by the beauty, modesty, and intelligence of Miss Daw.

You ask me why I do not fall in love with her. I will be frank, Jack: I have thought of that. She is young, rich, accomplished, uniting in herself more attractions, mental and personal, than I can recall in any girl of my acquaintance; but she lacks the something that would be necessary to inspire in me that kind of interest. Possessing this unnamed quantity, a woman neither beautiful nor wealthy nor very young could bring me to her feet. But not Miss Daw. If we were shipwrecked together on an uninhabited island — let me suggest a tropical

island, for it costs no more to be picturesque — I would build her a bamboo hut, I would fetch her bread-fruit and cocoanuts, I would fry yams for her, I would lure the ingenuous turtle and make her nourishing soups, but I would n't make love to her — not under eighteen months. I would like to have her for a sister, that I might shield her and counsel her, and spend half my income on old thread-lace and camel's-hair shawls. (We are off the island now.) If such were not my feeling, there would still be an obstacle to my loving Miss Daw. A greater misfortune could scarcely befall me than to love her. Flemming, I am about to make a revelation that will astonish you. I may be all wrong in my premises and consequently in my conclusions ; but you shall judge.

That night when I returned to my room after the croquet party at the Daws', and was thinking over the trivial events of the evening, I was suddenly impressed by the air of eager attention with which Miss Daw had followed my account of your accident. I think I mentioned this to you. Well, the next morning, as I went to mail my letter, I overtook Miss Daw on the road to Rye, where the post-office is, and accompanied her thither and back, an hour's walk. The conversation again turned on you, and again I remarked that inexplicable look of

interest which had lighted up her face the previous evening. Since then, I have seen Miss Daw perhaps ten times, perhaps oftener, and on each occasion I found that when I was not speaking of you, or your sister, or some person or place associated with you, I was not holding her attention. She would be absent-minded, her eyes would wander away from me to the sea, or to some distant object in the landscape; her fingers would play with the leaves of a book in a way that convinced me she was not listening. At these moments if I abruptly changed the theme — I did it several times as an experiment — and dropped some remark about my friend Flemming, then the sombre blue eyes would come back to me instantly.

Now, is not this the oddest thing in the world? No, not the oddest. The effect which you tell me was produced on you by my casual mention of an unknown girl swinging in a hammock is certainly as strange. You can conjecture how that passage in your letter of Friday startled me. Is it possible, then, that two persons who have never met, and who are hundreds of miles apart, can exert a magnetic influence on each other? I have read of such psychological phenomena, but never credited them. I leave the solution of the problem to you. As for myself, all other things being favorable, it would be impossible for me to fall

in love with a woman who listens to me only when I am talking of my friend!

I am not aware that any one is paying marked attention to my fair neighbor. The lieutenant of the navy — he is stationed at Rivermouth — sometimes drops in of an evening, and sometimes the rector from Stillwater; the lieutenant the oftener. He was there last night. I should not be surprised if he had an eye to the heiress; but he is not formidable. Mistress Daw carries a neat little spear of irony, and the honest lieutenant seems to have a particular facility for impaling himself on the point of it. He is not dangerous, I should say; though I have known a woman to satirize a man for years, and marry him after all. Decidedly, the lowly rector is not dangerous; yet, again, who has not seen Cloth of Frieze victorious in the lists where Cloth of Gold went down?

As to the photograph. There is an exquisite ivorytype of Marjorie, in passe-partout, on the drawing-room mantel-piece. It would be missed at once if taken. I would do anything reasonable for you, Jack; but I 've no burning desire to be hauled up before the local justice of the peace, on a charge of petty larceny.

P. S. — Enclosed is a spray of mignonette, which I advise you to treat tenderly. Yes, we talked of you again last night, as usual. It is becoming a little dreary for me.

VIII

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 22, 1872

YOUR letter in reply to my last has occupied my thoughts all the morning. I do not know what to think. Do you mean to say that you are seriously half in love with a woman whom you have never seen — with a shadow, a chimera? for what else can Miss Daw be to you? I do not understand it at all. I understand neither you nor her. You are a couple of ethereal beings moving in finer air than I can breathe with my commonplace lungs. Such delicacy of sentiment is something that I admire without comprehending. I am bewildered. I am of the earth earthy, and I find myself in the incongruous position of having to do with mere souls, with natures so finely tempered that I run some risk of shattering them in my awkwardness. I am as Caliban among the spirits!

Reflecting on your letter, I am not sure that it is wise in me to continue this correspondence.

But no, Jack; I do wrong to doubt the good sense that forms the basis of your character. You are deeply interested in Miss Daw; you feel that she is a person whom you may perhaps greatly admire when you know her: at the same time you bear in mind that the chances are ten to five that, when you do come to know her, she will fall far short of your ideal, and you will not care for her in the least. Look at it in this sensible light, and I will hold back nothing from you.

Yesterday afternoon my father and myself rode over to Rivermouth with the Daws. A heavy rain in the morning had cooled the atmosphere and laid the dust. To Rivermouth is a drive of eight miles, along a winding road lined all the way with wild barberry-bushes. I never saw anything more brilliant than these bushes, the green of the foliage and the faint blush of the berries intensified by the rain. The colonel drove, with my father in front, Miss Daw and I on the back seat. I resolved that for the first five miles your name should not pass my lips. I was amused by the artful attempts she made, at the start, to break through my reticence. Then a silence fell upon her; and then she became suddenly gay. That keenness which I enjoyed so much when it was exercised on the lieutenant was not so satisfactory

directed against myself. Miss Daw has great sweetness of disposition, but she can be disagreeable. She is like the young lady in the rhyme, with the curl on her forehead —

"When she is good,
She is very, very good,
And when she is bad, she is horrid!"

I kept to my resolution, however; but on the return home I relented, and talked of your mare! Miss Daw is going to try a side-saddle on Margot some morning. The animal is a trifle too light for my weight. By the bye, I nearly forgot to say that Miss Daw sat for a picture yesterday to a Rivermouth artist. If the negative turns out well, I am to have a copy. So our ends will be accomplished without crime. I wish, though, I could send you the ivorytype in the drawing-room; it is cleverly colored, and would give you an idea of her hair and eyes, which of course the other will not.

No, Jack, the spray of mignonette did not come from me. A man of twenty-eight does n't enclose flowers in his letters — to another man. But don't attach too much significance to the circumstance. She gives sprays of mignonette to the rector, sprays to the lieutenant. She has even given a rose from her bosom to your slave. It is her jocund nature to scatter flowers, like Spring.

If my letters sometimes read disjointedly, you must understand that I never finish one at a sitting, but write at intervals, when the mood is on me.

The mood is not on me now.

IX

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 23, 1872

I HAVE just returned from the strangest interview with Marjorie. She has all but confessed to me her interest in you. But with what modesty and dignity! Her words elude my pen as I attempt to put them on paper; and, indeed, it was not so much what she said as her manner; and that I cannot reproduce. Perhaps it was of a piece with the strangeness of this whole business, that she should tacitly acknowledge to a third party the love she feels for a man she has never beheld! But I have lost, through your aid, the faculty of being surprised. I accept things as persons do in dreams. Now that I am again in my room, it all appears like an illusion — the black masses of Rembrandtish shadow under the trees, the fireflies whirling in Pyrrhic dances among the shrubbery, the sea over there, Marjorie sitting in the hammock!

It is past midnight, and I am too sleepy to write more.

Thursday Morning

My father has suddenly taken it into his head to spend a few days at the Shoals. In the meanwhile you will not hear from me. I see Marjorie walking in the garden with the colonel. I wish I could speak to her alone, but shall probably not have an opportunity before we leave.

X

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 28, 1872

You were passing into your second childhood, were you? Your intellect was so reduced that my epistolary gifts seemed quite considerable to you, did they? I rise superior to the sarcasm in your favor of the 11th instant, when I notice that five days' silence on my part is sufficient to throw you into the depths of despondency.

We returned only this morning from Appledore, that enchanted island — at four dollars per day. I find on my desk three letters from you! Evidently there is no lingering doubt in *your* mind as to the pleasure I derive from your correspondence. These letters are undated, but in what I take to be the latest are two passages that require my consideration. You will pardon my candor, dear Flemming, but the conviction forces itself upon me that as your leg grows stronger your head becomes weaker. You ask my advice on a certain point. I will

give it. In my opinion you could do nothing more unwise than to address a note to Miss Daw, thanking her for the flower. It would, I am sure, offend her delicacy beyond pardon. She knows you only through me; you are to her an abstraction, a figure in a dream — a dream from which the faintest shock would awaken her. Of course, if you enclose a note to me and insist on its delivery, I shall deliver it; but I advise you not to do so.

You say you are able, with the aid of a cane, to walk about your chamber, and that you purpose to come to The Pines the instant Dillon thinks you strong enough to stand the journey. Again I advise you not to. Do you not see that, every hour you remain away, Marjorie's glamour deepens, and your influence over her increases? You will ruin everything by precipitancy. Wait until you are entirely recovered; in any case, do not come without giving me warning. I fear the effect of your abrupt advent here — under the circumstances.

Miss Daw was evidently glad to see us back again, and gave me both hands in the frankest way. She stopped at the door a moment this afternoon in the carriage; she had been over to Rivermouth for her pictures. Unluckily the photographer had spilt some acid on the plate, and she was obliged to give him another sitting.

I have an intuition that something is troubling Marjorie. She had an abstracted air not usual with her. However, it may be only my fancy. . . . I end this, leaving several things unsaid, to accompany my father on one of those long walks which are now his chief medicine — and mine!

XI

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 29, 1872

I WRITE in great haste to tell you what has taken place here since my letter of last night. I am in the utmost perplexity. Only one thing is plain — *you* must not dream of coming to The Pines. Marjorie has told her father everything! I saw her for a few minutes, an hour ago, in the garden; and, as near as I could gather from her confused statement, the facts are these: Lieutenant Bradley — that 's the naval officer stationed at Rivermouth — has been paying court to Miss Daw for some time past, but not so much to her liking as to that of the colonel, who it seems is an old friend of the young gentleman's father. Yesterday (I knew she was in some trouble when she drove up to our gate) the colonel spoke to Marjorie of Bradley — urged his suit, I infer. Marjorie expressed her dislike for the lieutenant with characteristic frankness, and finally confessed to her father — well, I really do not know what

she confessed. It must have been the vaguest of confessions, and must have sufficiently puzzled the colonel. At any rate, it exasperated him. I suppose I am implicated in the matter, and that the colonel feels bitterly towards me. I do not see why: I have carried no messages between you and Miss Daw; I have behaved with the greatest discretion. I can find no flaw anywhere in my proceeding. I do not see that anybody has done anything — except the colonel himself.

It is probable, nevertheless, that the friendly relations between the two houses will be broken off. "A plague o' both your houses," say you. I will keep you informed, as well as I can, of what occurs over the way. We shall remain here until the second week in September. Stay where you are, or, at all events, do not dream of joining me. . . . Colonel Daw is sitting on the piazza looking rather wicked. I have not seen Marjorie since I parted with her in the garden.

XII

EDWARD DELANEY TO THOMAS DILLON, M. D., MADISON SQUARE, NEW YORK

August 30, 1872

My dear Doctor: If you have any influence over Flemming, I beg of you to exert it to prevent his coming to this place at present. There are circumstances, which I will explain to you before long, that make it of the first importance that he should not come into this neighborhood. His appearance here, I speak advisedly, would be disastrous to him. In urging him to remain in New York, or to go to some inland resort, you will be doing him and me a real service. Of course you will not mention my name in this connection. You know me well enough, my dear doctor, to be assured that, in begging your secret coöperation, I have reasons that will meet your entire approval when they are made plain to you. We shall return to town on the 15th of next month, and my first duty will be to present myself at your hospitable door and satisfy your curiosity, if I

have excited it. My father, I am glad to state, has so greatly improved that he can no longer be regarded as an invalid. With great esteem, I am, etc., etc.

XIII

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

August 31, 1872

Your letter, announcing your mad determination to come here, has just reached me. I beseech you to reflect a moment. The step would be fatal to your interests and hers. You would furnish just cause for irritation to R. W. D.; and, though he loves Marjorie devotedly, he is capable of going to any lengths if opposed. You would not like, I am convinced, to be the means of causing him to treat *her* with severity. That would be the result of your presence at The Pines at this juncture. I am annoyed to be obliged to point out these things to you. We are on very delicate ground, Jack; the situation is critical, and the slightest mistake in a move would cost us the game. If you consider it worth the winning, be patient. Trust a little to my sagacity. Wait and see what happens. Moreover, I understand from Dillon that you are in no condition to take so

long a journey. He thinks the air of the coast would be the worst thing possible for you; that you ought to go inland, if anywhere. Be advised by me. Be advised by Dillon.

XIV

TELEGRAMS

September 1, 1872

1 — To Edward Delaney

Letter received. Dillon be hanged. I think I ought to be on the ground. J. F.

2 — To John Flemming

Stay where you are. You would only complicate matters. Do not move until you hear from me. E. D.

3 — To Edward Delaney

My being at The Pines could be kept secret. I must see her. J. F.

4 — To John Flemming

Do not think of it. It would be useless. R. W. D. has locked M. in her room. You would not be able to effect an interview.

E. D.

5 — To Edward Delaney

Locked her in her room. Good God! That settles the question. I shall leave by the twelve-fifteen express. J. F.

XV

THE ARRIVAL

On the second day of September, 1872, as the down express, due at 3.40, left the station at Hampton, a young man, leaning on the shoulder of a servant, whom he addressed as Watkins, stepped from the platform into a hack, and requested to be driven to The Pines. On arriving at the gate of a modest farm-house, a few miles from the station, the young man descended with difficulty from the carriage, and, casting a hasty glance across the road, seemed much impressed by some peculiarity in the landscape. Again leaning on the shoulder of the person Watkins, he walked to the door of the farm-house and inquired for Mr. Edward Delaney. He was informed by the aged man who answered his knock, that Mr. Edward Delaney had gone to Boston the day before, but that Mr. Jonas Delaney was within. This information did not appear satisfactory to the stranger, who inquired if Mr. Edward Delaney

had left any message for Mr. John Flemming. There *was* a letter for Mr. Flemming, if he were that person. After a brief absence the aged man reappeared with a Letter.

XVI

EDWARD DELANEY TO JOHN FLEMMING

September 1, 1872

I AM horror-stricken at what I have done! When I began this correspondence I had no other purpose than to relieve the tedium of your sick-chamber. Dillon told me to cheer you up. I tried to. I thought that you entered into the spirit of the thing. I had no idea, until within a few days, that you were taking matters *au grand sérieux*.

What can I say? I am in sackcloth and ashes. I am a pariah, a dog of an outcast. I tried to make a little romance to interest you, something soothing and idyllic, and, by Jove! I have done it only too well! My father does not know a word of this, so don't jar the old gentleman any more than you can help. I fly from the wrath to come — when you arrive! For oh, dear Jack, there is n't any colonial mansion on the other side of the road, there is n't any piazza, there is n't any hammock — there is n't any Marjorie Daw!

MISS MEHETABEL'S SON

King. — Have you heard the argument?
Is there no offence in 't?
Ham. — No offence i' the world.

HAMLET.

I

THE OLD TAVERN AT BAYLEY'S FOUR-CORNERS

YOU will not find Greenton, or Bayley's Four-Corners, as it is more usually designated, on any map of New England that I know of. It is not a town; it is not even a village; it is merely an absurd hotel. The almost indescribable place called Greenton is at the intersection of four roads, in the heart of New Hampshire, twenty miles from the nearest settlement of note, and ten miles from any railroad station. A good location for a hotel, you will say. Precisely; but there has always been a hotel there, and for the last dozen years it has been pretty well patronized — by one boarder. Not to trifle with an intelligent public, I will state at once that, in the early part of this century, Greenton

was a point at which the mail-coach on the Great Northern Route stopped to change horses and allow the passengers to dine. Persons in the county, wishing to take the early mail Portsmouth-ward, put up overnight at the old tavern, famous for its irreproachable larder and soft feather-beds. The tavern at that time was kept by one Jonathan Bayley, who rivalled his wallet in growing corpulent, and in due time passed away. At his death the establishment, which included a farm, fell into the hands of a son-in-law. Now, though Bayley left his son-in-law a hotel — which sounds handsome — he left him no guests; for at about the period of the old man's death the old stage-coach died also. Apoplexy carried off one, and steam the other. Thus, by a sudden swerve in the tide of progress, the tavern at the Corners found itself high and dry, like a wreck on a sand-bank. Shortly after this event, or may be contemporaneously, there was some attempt to build a town at Greenton; but it apparently failed, if eleven cellars choked up with *débris* and overgrown with burdocks are any indication of failure. The farm, however, was a good farm, as things go in New Hampshire, and Tobias Sewell, the son-in-law, could afford to snap his fingers at the travelling public if they came near enough — which they never did.

The hotel remains to-day pretty much the

same as when Jonathan Bayley handed in his accounts in 1840, except that Sewell has from time to time sold the furniture of some of the upper chambers to bridal couples in the neighborhood. The bar is still open, and the parlor door says PARLOUR in tall black letters. Now and then a passing drover looks in at that lonely bar-room, where a high-shouldered bottle of Santa Cruz rum ogles with a peculiarly knowing air a shrivelled lemon on a shelf; now and then a farmer rides across country to talk crops and stock and take a friendly glass with Tobias; and now and then a circus caravan with speckled ponies, or a menagerie with a soggy elephant, halts under the swinging sign, on which there is a dim mail-coach with four phantomish horses driven by a portly gentleman whose head has been washed off by the rain. Other customers there are none, excepting that one regular boarder whom I have mentioned.

If misery makes a man acquainted with strange bedfellows, it is equally certain that the profession of surveyor and civil engineer often takes one into undreamed-of localities. I had never heard of Greenton until my duties sent me there, and kept me there two weeks in the dreariest season of the year. I do not think I would, of my own volition, have selected Greenton for a fortnight's sojourn at any time; but

now the business is over, I shall never regret the circumstances that made me the guest of Tobias Sewell, and brought me into intimate relations with Miss Mehetabel's Son.

It was a black October night in the year of grace 1872, that discovered me standing in front of the old tavern at the Corners. Though the ten miles' ride from K—— had been depressing, especially the last five miles, on account of the cold autumnal rain that had set in, I felt a pang of regret on hearing the rickety open wagon turn round in the road and roll off in the darkness. There were no lights visible anywhere, and only for the big, shapeless mass of something in front of me, which the driver had said was the hotel, I should have fancied that I had been set down by the roadside. I was wet to the skin and in no amiable humor; and not being able to find bell-pull or knocker, or even a door, I belabored the side of the house with my heavy walking-stick. In a minute or two I saw a light flickering somewhere aloft, then I heard the sound of a window opening, followed by an exclamation of disgust as a blast of wind extinguished the candle which had given me an instantaneous picture *en silhouette* of a man leaning out of a casement.

"I say, what do you want, down there?" inquired an unprepossessing voice.

"I want to come in; I want a supper, and a bed, and numberless things."

"This is n't no time of night to go rousing honest folks out of their sleep. Who are you, anyway?"

The question, superficially considered, was a very simple one, and I, of all persons in the world, ought to have been able to answer it offhand; but it staggered me. Strangely enough, there came drifting across my memory the lettering on the back of a metaphysical work which I had seen years before on a shelf in the Astor Library. Owing to an unpremeditatedly funny collocation of title and author, the lettering read as follows: "Who am I? Jones." Evidently it had puzzled Jones to know who he was, or he would n't have written a book about it, and come to so lame and impotent a conclusion. It certainly puzzled me at that instant to define my identity. "Thirty years ago," I reflected, "I was nothing; fifty years hence I shall be nothing again, humanly speaking. In the meantime, who am I, sure enough?" It had never before occurred to me what an indefinite article I was. I wish it had not occurred to me then. Standing there in the rain and darkness, I wrestled vainly with the problem, and was constrained to fall back upon a Yankee expedient.

"Is n't this a hotel?" I asked finally.

"Well, it is a sort of hotel," said the voice doubtfully. My hesitation and prevarication had apparently not inspired my interlocutor with confidence in me.

"Then let me in. I have just driven over from K—— in this infernal rain. I am wet through and through."

"But what do you want here, at the Corners? What 's your business? Folks don't come here, leastways in the middle of the night."

"It is n't in the middle of the night," I returned, incensed. "I come on business connected with the new road. I 'm the superintendent of the works."

"Oh!"

"And if you don't open the door at once, I 'll raise the whole neighborhood — and then go to the other hotel."

When I said that, I supposed Greenton was a village with a population of at least three or four thousand, and was wondering vaguely at the absence of lights and other signs of human habitation. Surely, I thought, all the people cannot be abed and asleep at half past ten o'clock: perhaps I am in the business section of the town, among the shops.

"You jest wait," said the voice above.

This request was not devoid of a certain accent of menace, and I braced myself for a sortie on the part of the besieged, if he had any such hostile intent. Presently a door opened at the very place where I least expected a door, at the farther end of the building, in fact, and a man in his shirtsleeves, shielding a candle with his left hand, appeared on the threshold. I passed quickly into the house, with Mr. Tobias Sewell (for this was Mr. Sewell) at my heels, and found myself in a long, low-studded bar-room.

There were two chairs drawn up before the hearth, on which a huge hemlock backlog was still smouldering, and on the unpainted deal counter contiguous stood two cloudy glasses with bits of lemon-peel in the bottom, hinting at recent libations. Against the discolored wall over the bar hung a yellow handbill, in a warped frame, announcing that "the Next Annual N. H. Agricultural Fair" would take place on the 10th of September, 1841. There was no other furniture or decoration in this dismal apartment, except the cobwebs which festooned the ceiling, hanging down here and there like stalactites.

Mr. Sewell set the candlestick on the mantel-shelf, and threw some pine-knots on the fire, which immediately broke into a blaze, and showed him to be a lank, narrow-chested man,

past sixty, with sparse, steel-gray hair, and small, deep-set eyes, perfectly round, like a fish's, and of no particular color. His chief personal characteristics seemed to be too much feet and not enough teeth. His sharply cut, but rather simple face, as he turned it towards me, wore a look of interrogation. I replied to his mute inquiry by taking out my pocket-book and handing him my business-card, which he held up to the candle and perused with great deliberation.

"You 're a civil engineer, are you?" he said, displaying his gums, which gave his countenance an expression of almost infantile innocence. He made no further audible remark, but mumbled between his thin lips something which an imaginative person might have construed into "If you 're a civil engineer, I 'll be blessed if I would n't like to see an uncivil one!"

Mr. Sewell's growl, however, was worse than his bite — owing to his lack of teeth probably — for he very good-naturedly set himself to work preparing supper for me. After a slice of cold ham, and a warm punch, to which my chilled condition gave a grateful flavor, I went to bed in a distant chamber in a most amiable mood, feeling satisfied that Jones was a donkey to bother himself about his identity.

When I awoke, the sun was several hours high. My bed faced a window, and by raising myself on one elbow I could look out on what I expected would be the main street. To my astonishment I beheld a lonely country road winding up a sterile hill and disappearing over the ridge. In a cornfield at the right of the road was a small private graveyard, enclosed by a crumbling stone wall with a red gate. The only thing suggestive of life was this little corner lot occupied by death. I got out of bed and went to the other window. There I had an uninterrupted sweep of twelve miles of open landscape, with Mount Agamenticus in the purple distance. Not a house or a spire in sight. "Well," I exclaimed, "Greenton does n't appear to be a very closely packed metropolis!" That rival hotel with which I had threatened Mr. Sewell overnight was not a deadly weapon, looking at it by daylight. "By Jove!" I reflected, "may be I 'm in the wrong place." But there, tacked against a panel of the bedroom door, was a faded time-table dated Greenton, August 1, 1839.

I smiled all the time I was dressing, and went smiling down-stairs, where I found Mr. Sewell, assisted by one of the fair sex in the first bloom of her eightieth year, serving breakfast for me on a small table — in the bar-room!

"I overslept myself this morning," I remarked apologetically, "and I see that I am putting you to some trouble. In future, if you will have me called, I will take my meals at the usual *table d'hôte*."

"At the what?" said Mr. Sewell.

"I mean with the other boarders."

Mr. Sewell paused in the act of lifting a chop from the fire, and, resting the point of his fork against the woodwork of the mantel-piece, grinned from ear to ear.

"Bless you! there is n't any other boarders. There has n't been anybody put up here sence — let me see — sence father-in-law died, and that was in the fall of '40. To be sure, there 's Silas; *he* 's a regular boarder; but I don't count him."

Mr. Sewell then explained how the tavern had lost its custom when the old stage line was broken up by the railroad. The introduction of steam was, in Mr. Sewell's estimation, a fatal error. "Jest killed local business. Carried it off, I 'm darned if I know where. The whole country has been sort o' retrograding ever sence steam was invented."

"You spoke of having one boarder," I said.

"Silas? Yes; he come here the summer my wife died — she that was 'Tilda Bayley — and he 's here yet, going on thirteen year. He

could n't live any longer with the old man. Between you and I, old Clem Jaffrey, Silas's father, was a hard nut. Yes," said Mr. Sewell, crooking his elbow in inimitable pantomime, "altogether too often. Found dead in the road hugging a three-gallon demijohn. *Habeas corpus* in the barn," added Mr. Sewell, intending, I presume, to intimate that a *post-mortem* examination had been deemed necessary. "Silas," he resumed, in that respectful tone which one should always adopt when speaking of capital, "is a man of considerable property; lives on his interest, and keeps a hoss and shay. He 's a great scholar, too, Silas; takes all the pe-ri-odicals and the Police Gazette regular."

Mr. Sewell was turning over a third chop, when the door opened and a stoutish, middle-aged little gentleman, clad in deep black, stepped into the room.

"Silas Jaffrey," said Mr. Sewell, with a comprehensive sweep of his arm, picking up me and the new-comer on one fork, so to speak. "Be acquainted!"

Mr. Jaffrey advanced briskly, and gave me his hand with unlooked-for cordiality. He was a dapper little man, with a head as round and nearly as bald as an orange, and not unlike an orange in complexion, either; he had twinkling gray eyes and a pronounced Roman nose, the

numerous freckles upon which were deepened by his funereal dress-coat and trousers. He reminded me of Alfred de Musset's blackbird, which, with its yellow beak and sombre plumage, looked like an undertaker eating an omelet.

"Silas will take care of you," said Mr. Sewell, taking down his hat from a peg behind the door. "I 've got the cattle to look after. Tell him, if you want anything."

While I ate my breakfast, Mr. Jaffrey hopped up and down the narrow bar-room and chirped away as blithely as a bird on a cherry-bough, occasionally ruffling with his fingers a slight fringe of auburn hair which stood up pertly round his head and seemed to possess a luminous quality of its own.

"Don't I find it a little slow up here at the Corners? Not at all, my dear sir. I am in the thick of life up here. So many interesting things going on all over the world — inventions, discoveries, spirits, railroad disasters, mysterious homicides. Poets, murderers, musicians, statesmen, distinguished travellers, prodigies of all kinds turning up everywhere. Very few events or persons escape me. I take three daily city papers, six weekly journals, all the monthly magazines, and two quarterlies. I could not get along with less. I could n't if

you asked me. I never feel lonely. How can I, being on terms of intimacy, as it were, with thousands and thousands of people? There 's that young woman out West. What an entertaining creature *she* is! — now in Missouri, now in Indiana, and now in Minnesota, always on the go, and all the time shedding needles from various parts of her body as if she really enjoyed it! Then there 's that versatile patriarch who walks hundreds of miles and saws thousands of feet of wood, before breakfast, and shows no signs of giving out. Then there 's that remarkable — one may say that historical — colored woman who knew Benjamin Franklin, and fought at the battle of Bunk — no, it is the old negro man who fought at Bunker Hill, a mere infant, of course, at that period. Really, now, it is quite curious to observe how that venerable female slave — formerly an African princess — is repeatedly dying in her hundred and eleventh year, and coming to life again punctually every six months in the small-type paragraphs. Are you aware, sir, that within the last twelve years no fewer than two hundred and eighty-seven of General Washington's colored coachmen have died?"

For the soul of me I could not tell whether this quaint little gentleman was chaffing me or not. I laid down my knife and fork, and stared at him.

"Then there are the mathematicians!" he cried vivaciously, without waiting for a reply. "I take great interest in them. Hear this!" and Mr. Jaffrey drew a newspaper from a pocket in the tail of his coat, and read as follows: "*It has been estimated that if all the candles manufactured by this eminent firm* (*Stearine & Co.*) *were placed end to end, they would reach* 2 *and* $\frac{7}{8}$ *times around the globe.* Of course," continued Mr. Jaffrey, folding up the journal reflectively, "abstruse calculations of this kind are not, perhaps, of vital importance, but they indicate the intellectual activity of the age. Seriously, now," he said, halting in front of the table, "what with books and papers and drives about the country, I do not find the days too long, though I seldom see any one, except when I go over to K—— for my mail. Existence may be very full to a man who stands a little aside from the tumult and watches it with philosophic eye. Possibly he may see more of the battle than those who are in the midst of the action. Once I was struggling with the crowd, as eager and undaunted as the best; perhaps I should have been struggling still. Indeed, I know my life would have been very different now if I had married Mehetabel — if I had married Mehetabel."

His vivacity was gone, an abrupt cloud had

come over his bright face, his figure seemed to have collapsed, the light seemed to have faded out of his hair. With a shuffling step, the very antithesis of his brisk, elastic tread, he turned to the door and passed into the road.

"Well," I said to myself, "if Greenton had forty thousand inhabitants, it could n't turn out a more astonishing old party than that!"

II

THE CASE OF SILAS JAFFREY

A MAN with a passion for *bric-à-brac* is always stumbling over antique bronzes, intaglios, mosaics, and daggers of the time of Benvenuto Cellini; the bibliophile finds creamy vellum folios and rare Alduses and Elzevirs waiting for him at unsuspected bookstalls; the numismatist has but to stretch forth his palm to have priceless coins drop into it. My own weakness is odd people, and I am constantly encountering them. It was plain that I had unearthed a couple of very queer specimens at Bayley's Four-Corners. I saw that a fortnight afforded me too brief an opportunity to develop the richness of both, and I resolved to devote my spare time to Mr. Jaffrey alone, instinctively recognizing in him an unfamiliar species. My professional work in the vicinity of Greenton left my evenings and occasionally an afternoon unoccupied; these intervals I purposed to employ in studying and classifying my fellow-boarder. It was necessary, as a preliminary

step, to learn something of his previous history, and to this end I addressed myself to Mr. Sewell that same night.

"I do not want to seem inquisitive," I said to the landlord, as he was fastening up the bar, which, by the way, was the *salle à manger* and general sitting-room — "I do not want to seem inquisitive, but your friend Mr. Jaffrey dropped a remark this morning at breakfast which — which was not altogether clear to me."

"About Mehetabel?" asked Mr. Sewell uneasily.

"Yes."

"Well, I wish he would n't!"

"He was friendly enough in the course of conversation to hint to me that he had not married the young woman, and seemed to regret it."

"No, he did n't marry Mehetabel."

"May I inquire *why* he did n't marry Mehetabel?"

"Never asked her. Might have married the girl forty times. Old Elkins's daughter, over at K—— She 'd have had him quick enough. Seven years, off and on, he kept company with Mehetabel, and then she died."

"And he never asked her?"

"He shilly-shallied. Perhaps he did n't think of it. When she was dead and gone, then

Silas was struck all of a heap — and that 's all about it."

Obviously Mr. Sewell did not intend to tell me anything more, and obviously there was more to tell. The topic was plainly disagreeable to him for some reason or other, and that unknown reason of course piqued my curiosity.

As I was absent from dinner and supper that day, I did not meet Mr. Jaffrey again until the following morning at breakfast. He had recovered his bird-like manner, and was full of a mysterious assassination that had just taken place in New York, all the thrilling details of which were at his fingers' ends. It was at once comical and sad to see this harmless old gentleman with his naïve, benevolent countenance, and his thin hair flaming up in a semicircle, like the footlights at a theatre, revelling in the intricacies of the unmentionable deed.

"You come up to my room to-night," he cried, with horrid glee, "and I 'll give you my theory of the murder. I 'll make it as clear as day to you that it was the detective himself who fired the three pistol-shots."

It was not so much the desire to have this point elucidated as to make a closer study of Mr. Jaffrey that led me to accept his invitation. Mr. Jaffrey's bedroom was in an L of the building, and was in no way noticeable except for

the numerous files of newspapers neatly arranged against the blank spaces of the walls, and a huge pile of old magazines which stood in one corner, reaching nearly up to the ceiling, and threatening to topple over each instant, like the leaning tower at Pisa. There were green paper shades at the windows, some faded chintz valances about the bed, and two or three easy-chairs covered with chintz. On a black-walnut shelf between the windows lay a choice collection of meerschaum and brier-wood pipes.

Filling one of the chocolate-colored bowls for me and another for himself, Mr. Jaffrey began prattling; but not about the murder, which appeared to have flown out of his mind. In fact, I do not remember that the topic was even touched upon, either then or afterwards.

"Cosey nest this," said Mr. Jaffrey, glancing complacently over the apartment. "What is more cheerful, now, in the fall of the year, than an open wood-fire? Do you hear those little chirps and twitters coming out of that piece of apple-wood? Those are the ghosts of the robins and bluebirds that sang upon the bough when it was in blossom last spring. In summer whole flocks of them come fluttering about the fruit-trees under the window: so I have singing birds all the year round. I take it very easy here, I can tell you, summer and winter. Not

much society. Tobias is not, perhaps, what one would term a great intellectual force, but he means well. He 's a realist — believes in coming down to what he calls 'the hard pan;' but his heart is in the right place, and he 's very kind to me. The wisest thing I ever did in my life was to sell out my grain business over at K——, thirteen years ago, and settle down at the Corners. When a man has made a competency, what does he want more? Besides, at that time an event occurred which destroyed any ambition I may have had. Mehetabel died."

"The lady you were engaged to?"

"N-o, not precisely engaged. I think it was quite understood between us, though nothing had been said on the subject. Typhoid," added Mr. Jaffrey in a low voice.

For several minutes he smoked in silence, a vague, troubled look playing over his countenance. Presently this passed away, and he fixed his gray eyes speculatively upon my face.

"If I had married Mehetabel," said Mr. Jaffrey slowly, and then he hesitated. I blew a ring of smoke into the air, and, resting my pipe on my knee, dropped into an attitude of attention. "If I had married Mehetabel, you know, we should have had — ahem! — a family."

"Very likely," I assented, vastly amused at this unexpected turn.

"A Boy!" exclaimed Mr. Jaffrey explosively.

"By all means, certainly, a son."

"Great trouble about naming the boy. Mehetabel's family want him named Elkanah Elkins, after her grandfather; I want him named Andrew Jackson. We compromise by christening him Elkanah Elkins Andrew Jackson Jaffrey. Rather a long name for such a short little fellow," said Mr. Jaffrey musingly.

"Andy is n't a bad nickname," I suggested.

"Not at all. We call him Andy, in the family. Somewhat fractious at first — colic and things. I suppose it is right, or it would n't be so; but the usefulness of measles, mumps, croup, whooping-cough, scarlatina, and fits is not clear to the parental eye. I wish Andy would be a model infant, and dodge the whole lot."

This supposititious child, born within the last few minutes, was plainly assuming the proportions of a reality to Mr. Jaffrey. I began to feel a little uncomfortable. I am, as I have said, a civil engineer, and it is not strictly in my line to assist at the births of infants, imaginary or otherwise. I pulled away vigorously at the pipe, and said nothing.

"What large blue eyes he has," resumed Mr.

Jaffrey, after a pause; "just like Hetty's; and the fair hair, too, like hers. How oddly certain distinctive features are handed down in families! Sometimes a mouth, sometimes a turn of the eyebrow. Wicked little boys over at K—— have now and then derisively advised me to follow my nose. It would be an interesting thing to do. I should find my nose flying about the world, turning up unexpectedly here and there, dodging this branch of the family and reappearing in that, now jumping over one great-grandchild to fasten itself upon another, and never losing its individuality. Look at Andy. There's Elkanah Elkins's chin to the life. Andy's chin is probably older than the Pyramids. Poor little thing," he cried, with sudden indescribable tenderness, "to lose his mother so early!" And Mr. Jaffrey's head sunk upon his breast, and his shoulders slanted forward, as if he were actually bending over the cradle of the child. The whole gesture and attitude was so natural that it startled me. The pipe slipped from my fingers and fell to the floor.

"Hush!" whispered Mr. Jaffrey, with a deprecating motion of his hand. "Andy's asleep!"

He rose softly from the chair and, walking across the room on tiptoe, drew down the shade at the window through which the moonlight was

streaming. Then he returned to his seat, and remained gazing with half-closed eyes into the dropping embers.

I refilled my pipe and smoked in profound silence, wondering what would come next. But nothing came next. Mr. Jaffrey had fallen into so brown a study that, a quarter of an hour afterwards, when I wished him good-night and withdrew, I do not think he noticed my departure.

I am not what is called a man of imagination; it is my habit to exclude most things not capable of mathematical demonstration; but I am not without a certain psychological insight, and I think I understood Mr. Jaffrey's case. I could easily understand how a man with an unhealthy, sensitive nature, overwhelmed by sudden calamity, might take refuge in some forlorn place like this old tavern, and dream his life away. To such a man — brooding forever on what might have been and dwelling wholly in the realm of his fancies — the actual world might indeed become as a dream, and nothing seem real but his illusions. I dare say that thirteen years of Bayley's Four-Corners would have its effect upon me; though instead of conjuring up golden-haired children of the Madonna, I should probably see gnomes and kobolds, and goblins engaged in hoisting false

signals and misplacing switches for midnight express trains.

"No doubt," I said to myself that night, as I lay in bed, thinking over the matter, "this once possible but now impossible child is a great comfort to the old gentleman — a greater comfort, perhaps, than a real son would be. May be Andy will vanish with the shades and mists of night, he is such an unsubstantial infant; but if he does not, and Mr. Jaffrey finds pleasure in talking to me about his son, I shall humor the old fellow. It would n't be a Christian act to knock over his harmless fancy."

I was very impatient to see if Mr. Jaffrey's illusion would stand the test of daylight. It did. Elkanah Elkins Andrew Jackson Jaffrey was, so to speak, alive and kicking the next morning. On taking his seat at the breakfast-table, Mr. Jaffrey whispered to me that Andy had had a comfortable night.

"Silas!" said Mr. Sewell sharply, "what are you whispering about?"

Mr. Sewell was in an ill-humor; perhaps he was jealous because I had passed the evening in Mr. Jaffrey's room; but surely Mr. Sewell could not expect his boarders to go to bed at eight o'clock every night, as he did. From time to time during the meal Mr. Sewell regarded me unkindly out of the corner of his

eye, and in helping me to the parsnips he poniarded them with quite a suggestive air. All this, however, did not prevent me from repairing to the door of Mr. Jaffrey's snuggery when night came.

"Well, Mr. Jaffrey, how's Andy this evening?"

"Got a tooth!" cried Mr. Jaffrey vivaciously.

"No!"

"Yes, he has! Just through. Gave the nurse a silver dollar. Standing reward for first tooth."

It was on the tip of my tongue to express surprise that an infant a day old should cut a tooth, when I suddenly recollected that Richard III. was born with teeth. Feeling myself to be on unfamiliar ground, I suppressed my criticism. It was well I did so, for in the next breath I was advised that half a year had elapsed since the previous evening.

"Andy's had a hard six months of it," said Mr. Jaffrey, with the well-known narrative air of fathers. "We've brought him up by hand. His grandfather, by the way, was brought up by the bottle" — and brought down by it, too, I added mentally, recalling Mr. Sewell's account of the old gentleman's tragic end.

Mr. Jaffrey then went on to give me a history of Andy's first six months, omitting no

detail however insignificant or irrelevant. This history I would in turn inflict upon the reader, if I were only certain that he is one of those dreadful parents who, under the ægis of friendship, bore you at a street-corner with that remarkable thing which Freddy said the other day, and insist on singing to you, at an evening party, the Iliad of Tommy's woes.

But to inflict such matters upon the unmarried reader would be an act of wanton cruelty. So I pass over that part of Andy's biography, and, for the same reason, make no record of the next four or five interviews I had with Mr. Jaffrey. It will be sufficient to state that Andy glided from extreme infancy to early youth with astonishing celerity — at the rate of one year per night, if I remember correctly; and — must I confess it? — before the week came to an end, this invisible hobgoblin of a boy was only little less of a reality to me than to Mr. Jaffrey.

At first I had lent myself to the old dreamer's whim with a keen perception of the humor of the thing; but by and by I found that I was talking and thinking of Miss Mehetabel's son as though he were a veritable personage. Mr. Jaffrey spoke of the child with such an air of conviction! — as if Andy were playing among his toys in the next room, or making mud-pies down in the yard. In these conversations, it

should be observed, the child was never supposed to be present, except on that single occasion when Mr. Jaffrey leaned over the cradle. After one of our *séances* I would lie awake until the small hours, thinking of the boy, and then fall asleep only to have indigestible dreams about him. Through the day, and sometimes in the midst of complicated calculations, I would catch myself wondering what Andy was up to now! There was no shaking him off; he became an inseparable nightmare to me; and I felt that if I remained much longer at Bayley's Four-Corners I should turn into just such another bald-headed, mild-eyed visionary as Silas Jaffrey.

Then the tavern was a grewsome old shell anyway, full of unaccountable noises after dark — rustlings of garments along unfrequented passages, and stealthy footfalls in unoccupied chambers overhead. I never knew of an old house without these mysterious noises. Next to my bedroom was a musty, dismantled apartment, in one corner of which, leaning against the wainscot, was a crippled mangle, with its iron crank tilted in the air like the elbow of the late Mr. Clem Jaffrey. Sometimes,

"In the dead vast and middle of the night,"

I used to hear sounds as if some one were turn-

ing that rusty crank on the sly. This occurred only on particularly cold nights, and I conceived the uncomfortable idea that it was the thin family ghosts, from the neglected graveyard in the cornfield, keeping themselves warm by running one another through the mangle. There was a haunted air about the whole place that made it easy for me to believe in the existence of a phantasm like Miss Mehetabel's son, who, after all, was less unearthly than Mr. Jaffrey himself, and seemed more properly an inhabitant of this globe than the toothless ogre who kept the inn, not to mention the silent Witch of Endor that cooked our meals for us over the bar-room fire.

In spite of the scowls and winks bestowed upon me by Mr. Sewell, who let slip no opportunity to testify his disapprobation of the intimacy, Mr. Jaffrey and I spent all our evenings together — those long autumnal evenings, through the length of which he talked about the boy, laying out his path in life and hedging the path with roses. He should be sent to the High School at Portsmouth, and then to college; he should be educated like a gentleman, Andy.

"When the old man dies," remarked Mr. Jaffrey one night, rubbing his hands gleefully, as if it were a great joke, "Andy will find that the old man has left him a pretty plum."

"What do you think of having Andy enter West Point, when he's old enough?" said Mr. Jaffrey on another occasion. "He need n't necessarily go into the army when he graduates; he can become a civil engineer."

This was a stroke of flattery so delicate and indirect that I could accept it without immodesty.

There had lately sprung up on the corner of Mr. Jaffrey's bureau a small tin house, Gothic in architecture and pink in color, with a slit in the roof, and the word BANK painted on one façade. Several times in the course of an evening Mr. Jaffrey would rise from his chair without interrupting the conversation, and gravely drop a nickel into the scuttle of the bank. It was pleasant to observe the solemnity of his countenance as he approached the edifice, and the air of triumph with which he resumed his seat by the fireplace. One night I missed the tin bank. It had disappeared, deposits and all, like a real bank. Evidently there had been a defalcation on rather a large scale. I strongly suspected that Mr. Sewell was at the bottom of it, but my suspicion was not shared by Mr. Jaffrey, who, remarking my glance at the bureau, became suddenly depressed. "I 'm afraid," he said, "that I have failed to instil into Andrew those principles of integrity which

— which" — and the old gentleman quite broke down.

Andy was now eight or nine years old, and for some time past, if the truth must be told, had given Mr. Jaffrey no inconsiderable trouble; what with his impishness and his illnesses, the boy led the pair of us a lively dance. I shall not soon forget the anxiety of Mr. Jaffrey the night Andy had the scarlet-fever — an anxiety which so infected me that I actually returned to the tavern the following afternoon earlier than usual, dreading to hear that the little spectre was dead, and greatly relieved on meeting Mr. Jaffrey at the door-step with his face wreathed in smiles. When I spoke to him of Andy, I was made aware that I was inquiring into a case of scarlet-fever that had occurred the year before!

It was at this time, towards the end of my second week at Greenton, that I noticed what was probably not a new trait — Mr. Jaffrey's curious sensitiveness to atmospherical changes. He was as sensitive as a barometer. The approach of a storm sent his mercury down instantly. When the weather was fair he was hopeful and sunny, and Andy's prospects were brilliant. When the weather was overcast and threatening he grew restless and despondent, and was afraid that the boy was not going to turn out well.

On the Saturday previous to my departure, which had been fixed for Monday, it rained heavily all the afternoon, and that night Mr. Jaffrey was in an unusually excitable and unhappy frame of mind. His mercury was very low indeed.

"That boy is going to the dogs just as fast as he can go," said Mr. Jaffrey, with a woful face. "I can't do anything with him."

"He'll come out all right, Mr. Jaffrey. Boys will be boys. I would not give a snap for a lad without animal spirits."

"But animal spirits," said Mr. Jaffrey sententiously, "should n't saw off the legs of the piano in Tobias's best parlor. I don't know what Tobias will say when he finds it out."

"What! has Andy sawed off the legs of the old spinet?" I returned, laughing.

"Worse than that."

"Played upon it, then!"

"No, sir. He has lied to me!"

"I can't believe that of Andy."

"Lied to me, sir," repeated Mr. Jaffrey severely. "He pledged me his word of honor that he would give over his climbing. The way that boy climbs sends a chill down my spine. This morning, notwithstanding his solemn promise, he shinned up the lightning-rod attached to the extension, and sat astride

the ridge-pole. I saw him, and he denied it! When a boy you have caressed and indulged and lavished pocket-money on lies to you and *will* climb, then there's nothing more to be said. He's a lost child."

"You take too dark a view of it, Mr. Jaffrey. Training and education are bound to tell in the end, and he has been well brought up."

"But I did n't bring him up on a lightning-rod, did I? If he is ever going to know how to behave, he ought to know now. To-morrow he will be eleven years old."

The reflection came to me that if Andy had not been brought up by the rod, he had certainly been brought up by the lightning. He was eleven years old in two weeks!

I essayed, with that perspicacious wisdom which seems to be the peculiar property of bachelors and elderly maiden ladies, to tranquillize Mr. Jaffrey's mind, and to give him some practical hints on the management of youth.

"Spank him," I suggested at last.

"I will!" said the old gentleman.

"And you'd better do it at once!" I added, as it flashed upon me that in six months Andy would be a hundred and forty-three years old! —an age at which parental discipline would have to be relaxed.

The next morning, Sunday, the rain came down as if determined to drive the quicksilver entirely out of my poor friend. Mr. Jaffrey sat bolt upright at the breakfast-table, looking as woe-begone as a bust of Dante, and retired to his chamber the moment the meal was finished. As the day advanced, the wind veered round to the northeast, and settled itself down to work. It was not pleasant to think, and I tried not to think, what Mr. Jaffrey's condition would be if the weather did not mend its manners by noon; but so far from clearing off at noon, the storm increased in violence, and as night set in the wind whistled in a spiteful falsetto key, and the rain lashed the old tavern as if it were a balky horse that refused to move on. The windows rattled in the worm-eaten frames, and the doors of remote rooms, where nobody ever went, slammed to in the maddest way. Now and then the tornado, sweeping down the side of Mount Agamenticus, bowled across the open country, and struck the ancient hostelry point-blank.

Mr. Jaffrey did not appear at supper. I knew that he was expecting me to come to his room as usual, and I turned over in my mind a dozen plans to evade seeing him that night. The landlord sat at the opposite side of the chimney-place, with his eye upon me. I fancy

he was aware of the effect of this storm on his other boarder, for at intervals, as the wind hurled itself against the exposed gable, threatening to burst in the windows, Mr. Sewell tipped me an atrocious wink, and displayed his gums in a way he had not done since the morning after my arrival at Greenton. I wondered if he suspected anything about Andy. There had been odd times during the past week when I felt convinced that the existence of Miss Mehetabel's son was no secret to Mr. Sewell.

In deference to the gale, the landlord sat up half an hour later than was his custom. At half past eight he went to bed, remarking that he thought the old pile would stand till morning.

He had been absent only a few minutes when I heard a rustling at the door. I looked up, and beheld Mr. Jaffrey standing on the threshold, with his dress in disorder, his scant hair flying, and the wildest expression on his face.

"He 's gone!" cried Mr. Jaffrey.

"Who? Sewell? Yes, he just went to bed."

"No, not Tobias — the boy!"

"What, run away?"

"No — he is dead! He has fallen from a step-ladder in the red chamber and broken his neck!"

Mr. Jaffrey threw up his hands with a gesture of despair, and disappeared. I followed him through the hall, saw him go into his own apartment, and heard the bolt of the door drawn to. Then I returned to the bar-room, and sat for an hour or two in the ruddy glow of the fire, brooding over the strange experience of the last fortnight.

On my way to bed I paused at Mr. Jaffrey's door, and, in a lull of the storm, the measured respiration within told me that the old gentleman was sleeping peacefully.

Slumber was coy with me that night. I lay listening to the soughing of the wind, and thinking of Mr. Jaffrey's illusion. It had amused me at first with its grotesqueness; but now the poor little phantom was dead, I was conscious that there had been something pathetic in it all along. Shortly after midnight the wind sunk down, coming and going fainter and fainter, floating around the eaves of the tavern with an undulating, murmurous sound, as if it were turning itself into soft wings to bear away the ghost of a little child.

Perhaps nothing that happened during my stay at Bayley's Four-Corners took me so completely by surprise as Mr. Jaffrey's radiant countenance the next morning. The morning itself was not fresher or sunnier. His round

face literally shone with geniality and happiness. His eyes twinkled like diamonds, and the magnetic light of his hair was turned on full. He came into my room while I was packing my valise. He chirped, and prattled, and carolled, and was sorry I was going away — but never a word about Andy. However, the boy had probably been dead several years then!

The open wagon that was to carry me to the station stood at the door; Mr. Sewell was placing my case of instruments under the seat, and Mr. Jaffrey had gone up to his room to get me a certain newspaper containing an account of a remarkable shipwreck on the Auckland Islands. I took the opportunity to thank Mr. Sewell for his courtesies to me, and to express my regret at leaving him and Mr. Jaffrey.

"I have become very much attached to Mr. Jaffrey," I said; "he is a most interesting person; but that hypothetical boy of his, that son of Miss Mehetabel's" —

"Yes, I know!" interrupted Mr. Sewell testily. "Fell off a step-ladder and broke his dratted neck. Eleven year old, was n't he? Always does, jest at that point. Next week Silas will begin the whole thing over again, if he can get anybody to listen to him."

"I see. Our amiable friend is a little queer on that subject."

Mr. Sewell glanced cautiously over his shoulder, and, tapping himself significantly on the forehead, said in a low voice—

"Room To Let — Unfurnished!"

A MIDNIGHT FANTASY

I

It was close upon eleven o'clock when I stepped out of the rear vestibule of the Boston Theatre, and, passing through the narrow court that leads to West Street, struck across the Common diagonally. Indeed, as I set foot on the Tremont Street Mall, I heard the Old South drowsily sounding the hour.

It was a tranquil June night, with no moon, but clusters of sensitive stars that seemed to shiver with cold as the wind swept by them; for perhaps there was a swift current of air up there in the zenith. However, not a leaf stirred on the Common; the foliage hung black and massive, as if cut in bronze; even the gaslights appeared to be infected by the prevailing calm, burning steadily behind their glass screens and turning the neighboring leaves into the tenderest emerald. Here and there, in the sombre row of houses stretching along Beacon Street, an illuminated window

gilded a few square feet of darkness ; and now and then a footfall sounded on a distant pavement. The pulse of the city throbbed languidly.

The lights far and near, the fantastic shadows of the elms and maples, the gathering dew, the elusive odor of new grass, and that peculiar hush which belongs only to midnight — as if Time had paused in his flight and were holding his breath — gave to the place, so familiar to me by day, an air of indescribable strangeness and remoteness. The vast, deserted park had lost all its wonted outlines ; I walked doubtfully on the flagstones which I had many a time helped to wear smooth ; I seemed to be wandering in some lonely unknown garden across the seas — in that old garden in Verona where Shakespeare's ill-starred lovers met and parted. The white granite façade over yonder — the Somerset Club — might well have been the house of Capulet : there was the clambering vine reaching up like a pliant silken ladder ; there, near by, was the low-hung balcony, wanting only the slight girlish figure — immortal shape of fire and dew ! — to make the illusion perfect.

I do not know what suggested it ; perhaps it was something in the play I had just witnessed — it is not always easy to put one's fin-

ger on the invisible electric thread that runs from thought to thought — but as I sauntered on I fell to thinking of the ill-assorted marriages I had known. Suddenly there hurried along the gravelled path which crossed mine obliquely a half-indistinguishable throng of pathetic men and women: two by two they filed before me, each becoming startlingly distinct for an instant as they passed — some with tears, some with hollow smiles, and some with firm-set lips, bearing their fetters with them. There was little Alice chained to old Bowlsby; there was Lucille, "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall," linked forever to the dwarf Perrywinkle; there was my friend Porphyro, the poet, with his delicate genius shrivelled in the glare of the youngest Miss Lucifer's eyes; there they were Beauty and the Beast, Pride and Humility, Bluebeard and Fatima, Prose and Poetry, Riches and Poverty, Youth and Crabbed Age — O, sorrowful procession! All so wretched, when perhaps all might have been so happy if they had only paired differently!

I halted a moment to let the weird shapes drift by. As the last of the train melted into the darkness, my vagabond fancy went wandering back to the theatre and the play I had seen — Romeo and Juliet. Taking a lighter tint,

but still of the same sober color, my reflections continued.

What a different kind of woman Juliet would have been if she had not fallen in love with Romeo, but had bestowed her affection on some thoughtful and stately signior — on one of the Della Scalas, for example! What Juliet needed was a firm and gentle hand to tame her high spirit without breaking a pinion. She was a little too — vivacious, you might say — "gushing" would perhaps be the word if you were speaking of a modern maiden with so exuberant a disposition as Juliet's. She was too romantic, too blossomy, too impetuous, too wilful; old Capulet had brought her up injudiciously, and Lady Capulet was a nonentity. Yet in spite of faults of training and some slight inherent flaws of character, Juliet was a superb creature; there was a fascinating dash in her frankness; her modesty and daring were as happy rhymes as ever touched lips in a love-poem. But her impulses required curbing; her heart made too many beats to the minute. It was an evil destiny that flung in the path of so rich and passionate a nature a fire-brand like Romeo. Even if no family feud had existed, the match would not have been a wise one. As it was, the well-known result was inevitable. What could come of it but clandestine meetings,

secret marriage, flight, despair, poison, and the Tomb of the Capulets ?

I had left the park behind, by this, and had entered a thoroughfare where the street-lamps were closer together ; but the gloom of the trees seemed still to be overhanging me. The fact is, the tragedy had laid a black finger on my imagination. I wished that the play had ended a trifle more cheerfully. I wished — possibly because I see enough tragedy all around me without going to the theatre for it, or possibly it was because the lady who enacted the leading part was a remarkably clean-cut little person, with a golden sweep of eyelashes — I wished that Juliet could have had a more comfortable time of it. Instead of a yawning sepulchre, with Romeo and Juliet dying in the middle foreground, and that luckless young Paris stretched out on the left, spitted like a spring chicken with Montague's rapier, and Friar Laurence, with a dark lantern, groping about under the melancholy yews — in place of all this costly piled-up woe, I would have liked a pretty, mediæval chapel scene, with illuminated stained-glass windows, and trim acolytes holding lighted candles, and the great green curtain slowly descending to the first few bars of the Wedding March of Mendelssohn.

Of course Shakespeare was true to the life

in making them all die miserably. Besides, it was so they died in the novel of Matteo Bandello, from which the poet indirectly took his plot. Under the circumstances no other climax was practicable; and yet it was sad business. There were Mercutio, and Tybalt, and Paris, and Juliet, and Romeo, come to a bloody end in the bloom of their youth and strength and beauty.

The ghosts of these five murdered persons seemed to be on my track as I hurried down Revere Street to West Cedar. I fancied them hovering around the corner opposite the small drug-store, where a meagre apothecary was in the act of shutting up the fan-like jets of gas in his shop-window.

"No, Master Booth," I muttered in the imagined teeth of the tragedian, throwing an involuntary glance over my shoulder, "you 'll not catch me assisting at any more of your Shakespearean revivals. I would rather eat a pair of Welsh rarebits or a segment of mince-pie at midnight than sit through the finest tragedy that was ever writ."

As I said this I halted at the door of a house in Charles Place, and was fumbling for my latch-key, when a most absurd idea came into my head. I let the key slip back into my pocket, and strode down Charles Place into

Cambridge Street, and across the long bridge, and then swiftly forward.

I remember, vaguely, that I paused for a moment on the draw of the bridge, to look at the semicircular fringe of lights duplicating itself in the smooth Charles in the rear of Beacon Street — as lovely a bit of Venetian effect as you will get outside of Venice; I remember meeting, farther on, near a stiff wooden church in Cambridgeport, a lumbering covered wagon, evidently from Brighton and bound for Quincy Market; and still farther on, somewhere in the vicinity of Harvard Square and the college buildings, I recollect catching a glimpse of a policeman, who, probably observing something suspicious in my demeanor, discreetly walked off in an opposite direction. I recall these trifles indistinctly, for during this preposterous excursion I was at no time sharply conscious of my surroundings; the material world presented itself to me as if through a piece of stained glass. It was only when I had reached a neighborhood where the houses were few and the gardens many, a neighborhood where the closely knitted town began to fringe out into country, that I came to the end of my dream. And what was the dream? The slightest of tissues, madam; a gossamer, a web of shadows, a thing woven out of starlight. Looking at it by day,

I find that its colors are pallid, and its threaded diamonds — they were merely the perishable dews of that June night — have evaporated in the sunshine; but such as it is you shall have it.

II

THE young prince Hamlet was not happy at Elsinore. It was not because he missed the gay student-life of Wittenberg, and that the little Danish court was intolerably dull. It was not because the didactic lord chamberlain bored him with long speeches, or that the lord chamberlain's daughter was become a shade wearisome. Hamlet had more serious cues for unhappiness. He had been summoned suddenly from Wittenberg to attend his father's funeral; close upon this, and while his grief was green, his mother had married with his uncle Claudius, whom Hamlet had never liked.

The indecorous haste of these nuptials — they took place within two months after the king's death, the funeral-baked meats, as Hamlet cursorily remarked, furnishing forth the marriage-tables — struck the young prince aghast. He had loved the queen his mother, and had nearly idolized the late king; but now he forgot to lament the death of the one in contemplating the life of the other. The billing and cooing of the newly married couple filled him

with horror. Anger, shame, pity, and despair seized upon him by turns. He fell into a forlorn condition, forsaking his books, eating little save of the chameleon's dish, the air, drinking deep of Rhenish, letting his long, black locks go unkempt, and neglecting his dress — he who had hitherto been "the glass of fashion and the mould of form," as Ophelia had prettily said of him.

Often for half the night he would wander along the ramparts of the castle, at the imminent risk of tumbling off, gazing seaward and muttering strangely to himself, and evolving frightful spectres out of the shadows cast by the turrets. Sometimes he lapsed into a gentle melancholy; but not seldom his mood was ferocious, and at such times the conversational Polonius, with a discretion that did him credit, steered clear of my lord Hamlet.

He turned no more graceful compliments for Ophelia. The thought of marrying her, if he had ever seriously thought of it, was gone now. He rather ruthlessly advised her to go into a nunnery. His mother had sickened him of women. It was of her he spoke the notable words, "Frailty, thy name is woman!" which, some time afterwards, an amiable French gentleman had neatly engraved on the head-stone of his wife, who had long been an invalid.

Even the king and queen did not escape Hamlet in his distempered moments. Passing his mother in a corridor or on a staircase of the palace, he would suddenly plant a verbal dagger in her heart; and frequently, in full court, he would deal the king such a cutting reply as caused him to blanch, and gnaw his lip.

If the spectacle of Gertrude and Claudius was hateful to Hamlet, the presence of Hamlet, on the other hand, was scarcely a comfort to the royal lovers. At first his uncle had called him "our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son," trying to smooth over matters; but Hamlet would have none of it. Therefore, one day, when the young prince abruptly announced his intention to go abroad, neither the king nor the queen placed impediments in his way, though some months previously they had both protested strongly against his returning to Wittenberg.

The small-fry of the court knew nothing of Prince Hamlet's determination until he had sailed from Elsinore; their knowledge then was confined to the fact of his departure. It was only to Horatio, his fellow-student and friend, that Hamlet confided the real cause of his self-imposed exile, though perhaps Ophelia half suspected it.

Polonius had dropped an early hint to his

daughter concerning Hamlet's intent. She knew that everything was over between them, and the night before he embarked Ophelia placed in the prince's hand the few letters and trinkets he had given her, repeating, as she did so, a certain distich which somehow haunted Hamlet's memory for several days after he was on shipboard —

> "Take these again; for to the noble mind
> Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind."

"These could never have waxed poor," said Hamlet softly to himself, as he leaned over the taffrail, the third day out, spreading the trinkets in his palm, "being originally of but little worth. I fancy that that allusion to 'rich gifts' was a trifle malicious on the part of the fair Ophelia;" and he quietly dropped them into the sea.

It was as a Danish gentleman voyaging for pleasure, and for mental profit also, if that should happen, that Hamlet set forth on his travels. Settled destination he had none, his sole plan being to get clear of Denmark as speedily as possible, and then to drift whither his fancy took him. His fancy naturally took him southward, as it would have taken him northward if he had been a Southron. Many a time while climbing the bleak crags around Elsinore he had thought of the land of the cit-

ron and the palm ; lying on his couch at night, and listening to the wind as it howled along the machicolated battlements of the castle, his dreams had turned from the cold, blonde ladies of his father's court to the warmer beauties that ripen under sunny skies. He was free now to test the visions of his boyhood. So it chanced, after various wanderings, all tending imperceptibly in one direction, that Hamlet bent his steps towards Italy.

In those rude days one did not accomplish a long journey without having wonderful adventures befall, or encountering divers perils by the way. It was a period when a stout blade on the thigh was a most excellent travelling companion. Hamlet, though of a philosophical complexion, was not slower than another man to scent an affront; he excelled at feats of arms, and no doubt his skill, caught of the old fencing-master at Elsinore, stood him in good stead more than once when his wit would not have saved him. Certainly, he had hair-breadth escapes while toiling through the wilds of Prussia and Bavaria and Switzerland. At all events, he counted himself fortunate the night he arrived at Verona with nothing more serious than a two-inch scratch on his sword arm.

There he lodged himself, as became a gentleman of fortune, in a suite of chambers in a

comfortable palace overlooking the swift-flowing Adige — a riotous yellow stream that cut the town into two parts, and was spanned here and there by rough-hewn stone bridges, which it sometimes sportively washed away. It was a brave old town that had stood sieges and plagues, and was full of mouldy, picturesque buildings and a gayety that has since grown somewhat mouldy. A goodly place to rest in for the wayworn pilgrim! He dimly recollected that he had letters to one or two illustrious families; but he cared not to deliver them at once. It was pleasant to stroll about the city, unknown. There were sights to see: the Roman amphitheatre, and the churches with their sculptured sarcophagi and saintly relics — interesting joints and saddles of martyrs, and enough fragments of the true cross to build a ship. The life in the *piazze* and on the streets, the crowds in the shops, the pageants, the lights, the stir, the color, all mightily took the eye of the young Dane. He was in a mood to be amused. Everything diverted him — the faint pulsing of a guitar-string in an adjacent garden at midnight, or the sharp clash of gleaming sword blades under his window, when the Montecchi and the Cappelletti chanced to encounter one another in the narrow footway.

Meanwhile, Hamlet brushed up his Italian.

He was well versed in the literature of the language, particularly in its dramatic literature, and had long meditated penning a gloss to The Murther of Gonzago, a play which Hamlet held in deservedly high estimation.

He made acquaintances, too. In the same palace where he sojourned lived a very valiant soldier and wit, a kinsman to Prince Escalus, one Mercutio by name, with whom Hamlet exchanged civilities on the staircase at first, and then fell into companionship. A number of Verona's noble youths, poets and light-hearted men-about-town, frequented Mercutio's chambers, and with these Hamlet soon became on terms.

Among the rest were an agreeable gentleman, with hazel eyes, named Benvolio, and a gallant young fellow called Romeo, whom Mercutio bantered pitilessly and loved heartily. This Romeo, who belonged to one of the first families, was a very susceptible spark, which the slightest breath of a pretty woman was sufficient to blow into flame. To change the metaphor, he fell from one love affair into another as easily and logically as a ripe pomegranate drops from a bough. He was generally unlucky in these matters, curiously enough, for he was a handsome youth in his saffron satin doublet slashed with black, and his jaunty vel-

vet bonnet with its trailing plume of ostrich feather.

At the time of Hamlet's coming to Verona, Romeo was in a great despair of love in consequence of an unrequited passion for a certain lady of the city, between whose family and his own a deadly feud had existed for centuries. Somebody had stepped on somebody else's lapdog in the far ages, and the two families had been slashing and hacking at each other ever since. It appeared that Romeo had scaled a garden wall, one night, and broken upon the meditations of his inamorata, who, as chance would have it, was sitting on her balcony enjoying the moonrise. No lady could be insensible to such devotion, for it would have been death to Romeo if any of her kinsmen had found him in that particular locality. Some tender phrases passed between them, perhaps; but the lady was flurried, taken unawares, and afterwards, it seemed, altered her mind, and would have no further commerce with the Montague. This business furnished Mercutio's quiver with innumerable sly shafts, which Romeo received for the most part in good humor.

With these three gentlemen — Mercutio, Benvolio, and Romeo — Hamlet saw life in Verona, as young men will see life wherever they happen to be. Many a time the nightingale

ceased singing and the lark began before they were abed ; but perhaps it is not wise to inquire too closely into this. A month had slipped away since Hamlet's arrival; the hyacinths were opening in the gardens, and it was spring.

One morning, as he and Mercutio were lounging arm in arm on a bridge near their lodgings, they met a knave in livery puzzling over a parchment which he was plainly unable to decipher.

"Read it aloud, friend!" cried Mercutio, who always had a word to throw away.

"I would I could read it at all. I pray, sir, can you read?"

"With ease — if it is not my tailor's score;" and Mercutio took the parchment, which ran as follows —

"*Signior Martino, and his wife and daughters; County Anselmo, and his beauteous sisters; the lady widow Vitruvio; Signior Placentio, and his lovely nieces; Mercutio, and his brother Valentine; mine uncle Capulet, his wife and daughters; my fair niece Rosaline; Livia; Signior Valentio, and his cousin Tybalt; Lucio, and the lively Helena.*"

"A very select company, with the exception of that rogue Mercutio," said the soldier, laughing. "What does it mean?"

"My master, the Signior Capulet, gives a ball and supper to-night; these the guests; I

am his man Peter, and if you be not one of the house of Montague, I pray come and crush a cup of wine with us. Rest you merry;" and the knave, having got his billet deciphered for him, made off.

"One must needs go, being asked by both master and man; but since I am asked doubly, I 'll not go singly; I 'll bring you with me, Hamlet. It is a masquerade; I have had wind of it. The flower of the city will be there — all the high-bosomed roses and low-necked lilies."

Hamlet had seen nothing of society in Verona, properly speaking, and did not require much urging to assent to Mercutio's proposal, far from foreseeing that so slight a freak would have a fateful sequence.

It was late in the night when they presented themselves, in mask and domino, at the Capulet mansion. The music was at its sweetest and the torches were at their brightest, as the pair entered the dancing-hall. They had scarcely crossed the threshold when Hamlet's eyes rested upon a lady clad in a white silk robe, who held to her features, as she moved through the figure of the dance, a white satin mask, on each side of which was disclosed so much of the rosy oval of her face as made one long to look upon the rest. The ornaments this lady wore were pearls; her fan and slippers, like the robe and

mask, were white — nothing but white. Her eyes shone almost black contrasted with the braids of warm gold hair that glistened through a misty veil of Venetian stuff, which floated about her from time to time and enveloped her, as the blossoms do a tree. Hamlet could think of nothing but the almond-tree that stood in full bloom in the little *cortile* near his lodging. She seemed to him the incarnation of that exquisite spring-time which had touched and awakened all the leaves and buds in the sleepy old gardens around Verona.

"Mercutio! who is that lady?"

"The daughter of old Capulet, by her stature."

"And he that dances with her?"

"Paris, a kinsman to Can Grande della Scala."

"Her lover?"

"One of them."

"She has others?"

"Enough to make a squadron; only the blind and aged are exempt."

Here the music ceased and the dancers dispersed. Hamlet followed the lady with his eyes, and, seeing her left alone a moment, approached her. She received him graciously, as a mask receives a mask, and the two fell to talking, as persons do who have nothing to say

to each other and possess the art of saying it. Presently something in his voice struck on her ear, a new note, an intonation sweet and strange, that made her curious. Who was it? It could not be Valentine, nor Anselmo; he was too tall for Signior Placentio, not stout enough for Lucio; it was not her cousin Tybalt. Could it be that rash Montague who — Would he dare? Here, on the very points of their swords? The stream of maskers ebbed and flowed and surged around them, and the music began again, and Juliet listened and listened.

"Who are you, sir," she cried, at last, "that speak our tongue with feigned accent?"

"A stranger; an idler in Verona, though not a gay one — a black butterfly."

"Our Italian sun will gild your wings for you. Black edged with gilt goes gay."

"I am already not so sad-colored as I was."

"I would fain see your face, sir; if it match your voice, it needs must be a kindly one."

"I would we could change faces."

"So we shall at supper!"

"And hearts, too?"

"Nay, I would not give a merry heart for a sorrowful one; but I will quit my mask, and you yours; yet," and she spoke under her breath, "if you are, as I think, a gentleman of Verona — a Montague — do not unmask."

"I am not of Verona, lady; no one knows me here;" and Hamlet threw back the hood of his domino. Juliet held her mask aside for a moment, and the two stood looking into each other's eyes.

"Lady, we have in faith changed faces, at least as I shall carry yours forever in my memory."

"And I yours, sir," said Juliet softly, "wishing it looked not so pale and melancholy."

"Hamlet," whispered Mercutio, plucking at his friend's skirt, "the fellow there, talking with old Capulet — his wife's nephew, Tybalt, a quarrelsome dog — suspects we are Montagues. Let us get out of this peaceably, like soldiers who are too much gentlemen to cause a brawl under a host's roof."

With this Mercutio pushed Hamlet to the door, where they were joined by Benvolio. Juliet, with her eyes fixed upon the retreating maskers, stretched out her hand and grasped the arm of an ancient serving-woman who happened to be passing.

"Quick, good Nurse! go ask his name of yonder gentleman. Nay, not the one in green, dear! but he that hath the black domino and purple mask. What, did I touch your poor rheumatic arm? Ah, go now, sweet Nurse!"

As the Nurse hobbled off querulously on her

errand, Juliet murmured to herself an old rhyme she knew —

"If he be marriéd,
My grave is like to be my wedding bed!"

When Hamlet got back to his own chambers he sat on the edge of his couch in a brown study. The silvery moonlight, struggling through the swaying branches of a tree outside the window, drifted doubtfully into the room, and made a parody of that fleecy veil which erewhile had floated about the lissome form of the lovely Capulet. That he loved her, and must tell her that he loved her, was a foregone conclusion; but how should he contrive to see Juliet again? No one knew him in Verona; he had carefully preserved his incognito; even Mercutio regarded him as simply a young gentleman from Denmark, taking his ease in a foreign city. Presented, by Mercutio, as a rich Danish tourist, the Capulets would receive him courteously, of course; as a visitor, but not as a suitor. It was in another character that he must be presented — his own.

He was pondering what steps he could take to establish his identity, when he remembered the two or three letters which he had stuffed into his wallet on quitting Elsinore. He lighted a taper, and began examining the papers. Among them were the half dozen billet-doux

which Ophelia had returned to him the night before his departure. They were neatly tied together by a length of black ribbon, to which was attached a sprig of rosemary.

"That was just like Ophelia!" muttered the young man, tossing the package into the wallet again; "she was always having cheerful ideas like that."

How long ago seemed the night she had handed him these love-letters, in her demure little way! How misty and remote seemed everything connected with the old life at Elsinore! His father's death, his mother's marriage, his anguish and isolation — they were like things that had befallen somebody else. There was something incredible, too, in his present situation. Was he dreaming? Was he really in Italy, and in love?

He hastily bent forward and picked up a square folded paper lying half concealed under the others.

"How could I have forgotten it!" he exclaimed.

It was a missive addressed, in Horatio's angular hand, to the Signior Capulet of Verona, containing a few lines of introduction from Horatio, whose father had dealings with some of the rich Lombardy merchants and knew many of the leading families in the city. With

this and several epistles, preserved by chance, written to him by Queen Gertrude while he was at the university, Hamlet saw that he would have no difficulty in proving to the Capulets that he was the Prince of Denmark.

At an unseemly hour the next morning Mercutio was roused from his slumbers by Hamlet, who counted every minute a hundred years until he saw Juliet. Mercutio did not take this interruption too patiently, for the honest humorist was very serious as a sleeper; but his equilibrium was quickly restored by Hamlet's revelation.

The friends were long closeted together, and at the proper, ceremonious hour for visitors they repaired to the house of Capulet, who did not hide his sense of the honor done him by the prince. With scarcely any prelude Hamlet unfolded the motive of his visit, and was listened to with rapt attention by old Capulet, who inwardly blessed his stars that he had not given his daughter's hand to the County Paris, as he was on the point of doing. The ladies were not visible on this occasion; the fatigues of the ball overnight, etc.; but that same evening Hamlet was accorded an interview with Juliet and Lady Capulet, and a few days subsequently all Verona was talking of nothing but the new engagement.

The destructive Tybalt scowled at first, and twirled his fierce mustache, and young Paris took to writing dejected poetry; but they both soon recovered their serenity, seeing that nobody minded them, and went together arm in arm to pay their respects to Hamlet.

A new life began now for Hamlet. He shed his inky cloak, and came out in a doublet of insolent splendor, looking like a dagger-handle newly gilt. With his funereal gear he appeared to have thrown off something of his sepulchral gloom. It was impossible to be gloomy with Juliet, in whom each day developed some sunny charm unguessed before. Her freshness and coquettish candor were constant surprises. She had had many lovers, and she confessed them to Hamlet in the prettiest way. "Perhaps, my dear," she said to him one evening, with an ineffable smile, "I might have liked young Romeo very well, but the family were so opposed to it from the very first. And then he was so — so demonstrative, don't you know?"

Hamlet had known of Romeo's futile passion, but he had not been aware until then that his betrothed was the heroine of the balcony adventure. On leaving Juliet he went to look up the Montague; not for the purpose of crossing rapiers with him, as another man might have done, but to compliment him on his unexceptional taste in admiring so rare a lady.

But Romeo had disappeared in a most unaccountable manner, and his family were in great tribulation concerning him. It was thought that perhaps the unrelenting Rosaline (who had been Juliet's frigid predecessor) had relented, and Montague's man Abram was despatched to seek Romeo at her residence; but the Lady Rosaline, who was embroidering on her piazza, placidly denied all knowledge of him. It was then feared that he had fallen in one of the customary encounters; but there had been no fight, and nobody had been killed on either side for nearly twelve hours. Nevertheless, his exit had the appearance of being final. When Hamlet questioned Mercutio, the honest soldier laughed and stroked his blond mustache.

"The boy has gone off in a heat, I don't know where — to the icy ends of the earth, I believe, to cool himself."

Hamlet regretted that Romeo should have had any feeling in the matter; but regret was a bitter weed that did not thrive well in the atmosphere in which the fortunate lover was moving. He saw Juliet every day, and there was not a fleck upon his happiness, unless it was the garrulous Nurse, against whom Hamlet had taken a singular prejudice. He considered her a tiresome old person, not too decent in her discourse at times, and advised Juliet to get

rid of her; but the ancient serving-woman had been in the family for years, and it was not quite expedient to discharge her at that late day.

With the subtile penetration of old age the Nurse instantly detected Hamlet's dislike, and returned it heartily.

"Ah, ladybird," she cried one night, "ah, well-a-day! you know not how to choose a man. An I could choose for you, Jule! By God's lady, there's Signior Mercutio, a brave gentleman, a merry gentleman, and a virtuous, I warrant ye, whose little finger-joint is worth all the body of this blackbird prince, dropping down from Lord knows where to fly off with the sweetest bit of flesh in Verona. Marry, come up!"

But this was only a ripple on the stream that flowed so smoothly. Now and then, indeed, Hamlet felt called upon playfully to chide Juliet for her extravagance of language, as when, for instance, she prayed that when he died he might be cut out in little stars to deck the face of night. Hamlet objected, under any circumstances, to being cut out in little stars for any illuminating purposes whatsoever. Once she suggested to her lover that he should come to the garden after the family retired, and she would speak with him a moment from the bal-

cony. Now, as there was no obstacle to their seeing each other whenever they pleased, and as Hamlet was of a nice sense of honor, and since his engagement a most exquisite practicer of propriety, he did not encourage Juliet in her thoughtlessness.

"What!" he cried, lifting his finger at her reprovingly, "romantic again!"

This was their nearest approach to a lovers' quarrel. The next day Hamlet brought her, as peace-offering, a slender gold flask curiously wrought in niello, which he had had filled with a costly odor at an apothecary's as he came along.

"I never saw so lean a thing as that same culler of simples," said Hamlet, laughing; "a matter of ribs and shanks, a mere skeleton painted black. It is a rare essence, though. He told me its barbaric botanical name, but it escapes me."

"That which we call a rose," said Juliet, holding the perfumery to her nostrils and inclining herself prettily towards him, "would smell as sweet by any other name."

O Youth and Love! O fortunate Time!

There was a banquet almost every night at the Capulets', and the Montagues, up the street, kept their blinds drawn down, and Lady Montague, who had four marriageable, tawny daugh-

ters on her hands, was livid with envy at her neighbor's success. She would rather have had two or three Montagues prodded through the body than that the prince should have gone to the rival house.

Happy Prince!

If Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Laertes, and the rest of the dismal folk at Elsinore, could have seen him now, they would not have known him. Where were his wan looks and biting speeches? His eyes were no longer filled with mournful speculation. He went in glad apparel, and took the sunshine as his natural inheritance. If he ever fell into moodiness — it was partly constitutional with him — the shadow fled away at the first approach of that "loveliest weight on lightest foot." The sweet Veronese had nestled in his empty heart, and filled it with music. The ghosts and visions that used to haunt him were laid forever by Juliet's magic.

Happy Juliet!

Her beauty had taken a new gloss. The bud had grown into a flower, redeeming the promises of the bud. If her heart beat less wildly, it throbbed more strongly. If she had given Hamlet of her superabundance of spirits, he had given her of his wisdom and discretion. She had always been a great favorite in soci-

ety; but Verona thought her ravishing now. The mantua-makers cut their dresses by her patterns, and when she wore turquoise, garnets went out of style. Instead of the groans and tears, and all those distressing events which might possibly have happened if Juliet had persisted in loving Romeo — listen to her laugh and behold her merry eyes!

Every morning either Peter or Gregory might have been seen going up Hamlet's staircase with a note from Juliet — she had ceased to send the Nurse on discovering her lover's antipathy to that person — and some minutes later either Gregory or Peter might have been observed coming down the staircase with a missive from Hamlet. Juliet had detected his gift for verse, and insisted, rather capriciously, on having all his replies in that shape. Hamlet humored her, though he was often hard put to it; for the Muse is a coy immortal, and will not always come when she is wanted. Sometimes he was forced to fall back upon previous efforts, as when he translated these lines into very choice Italian —

> "Doubt thou the stars are fire,
> Doubt that the sun doth move;
> Doubt Truth to be a liar,
> But never doubt I love."

To be sure, he had originally composed this

quatrain for Ophelia; but what would you have? He had scarcely meant it then; he meant it now; besides, a felicitous rhyme never goes out of fashion. It always fits.

While transcribing the verse his thoughts naturally reverted to Ophelia, for the little poesy was full of a faint scent of the past, like a pressed flower. His conscience did not prick him at all. How fortunate for him and for her that matters had gone no further between them? Predisposed to melancholy, and inheriting a not very strong mind from her father, Ophelia was a lady who needed cheering up, if ever poor lady did. He, Hamlet, was the last man on the globe with whom she should have had any tender affiliation. If they had wed, they would have caught each other's despondency, and died, like a pair of sick ravens, within a fortnight. What had become of her? Had she gone into a nunnery? He would make her an abbess, if he ever returned to Elsinore.

After a month or two of courtship, there being no earthly reason to prolong it, Hamlet and Juliet were privately married in the Franciscan Chapel, Friar Laurence officiating; but there was a grand banquet that night at the Capulets', to which all Verona went. At Hamlet's intercession, the Montagues were courteously asked to this festival. To the amazement of

every one the Montagues accepted the invitation and came, and were treated royally, and the long, lamentable feud — it would have sorely puzzled either house to explain what it was all about — was at an end. The adherents of the Capulets and the Montagues were forbidden on the spot to bite any more thumbs at one another.

"It will detract from the general gayety of the town," Mercutio remarked. "Signior Tybalt, my friend, I shall never have the pleasure of running you through the diaphragm; a cup of wine with you!"

The guests were still at supper in the great pavilion erected in the garden, which was as light as day with the glare of innumerable flambeaux set among the shrubbery. Hamlet and Juliet, with several others, had withdrawn from the tables, and were standing in the doorway of the pavilion, when Hamlet's glance fell upon the familiar form of a young man who stood with one foot on the lower step, holding his plumed bonnet in his hand. His hose and doublet were travel-worn, but his honest face was as fresh as daybreak.

"What! Horatio?"

"The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever."

"Sir, my good friend: I 'll change *that* name with you. What brings you to Verona?"

"I fetch you news, my lord."

"Good news? Then the king is dead."

"The king lives, but Ophelia is no more."

"Ophelia dead!"

"Not so, my lord; she 's married."

"I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student."

"As I do live, my honored lord, 't is true."

"Married, say you?"

"Married to him that sent me hither — a gentleman of winning ways and a most choice conceit, the scion of a noble house here in Verona — one Romeo."

The oddest little expression flitted over Juliet's face. There was never woman yet, even on her bridal day, could forgive a jilted lover marrying.

"Ophelia wed!" murmured the bridegroom.

"Do you know the lady, dear?"

"Excellent well," replied Hamlet, turning to Juliet; "a most estimable young person, the daughter of my father's chamberlain. She is rather given to singing ballads of an elegiac nature," added the prince reflectingly, "but our madcap Romeo will cure her of that. Methinks I see them now" —

"Oh, where, my lord?"

"In my mind's eye, Horatio, surrounded by their little ones — noble youths and graceful

maidens, in whom the impetuosity of the fiery Romeo is tempered by the pensiveness of the fair Ophelia. I shall take it most unkindly of them, love," toying with Juliet's fingers, "if they do not name their first boy Hamlet."

It was just as my lord Hamlet finished speaking that the last horse-car for Boston — providentially belated between Watertown and Mount Auburn — swept round the curve of the track on which I was walking. The amber glow of the car-lantern lighted up my figure in the gloom, the driver gave a quick turn on the brake, and the conductor, making a sudden dexterous clutch at the strap over his head, sounded the death-knell of my fantasy as I stepped upon the rear platform.

MADEMOISELLE OLYMPE ZABRISKI

I

We are accustomed to speak with a certain light irony of the tendency which women have to gossip, as if the sin itself, if it is a sin, were of the gentler sex, and could by no chance be a masculine peccadillo. So far as my observation goes, men are as much given to small talk as women, and it is undeniable that we have produced the highest type of gossiper extant. Where will you find, in or out of literature, such another droll, delightful, chatty busybody as Samuel Pepys, Esq., Secretary to the Admiralty in the reigns of those fortunate gentlemen Charles II. and James II. of England? He is the king of tattlers as Shakespeare is the king of poets.

If it came to a matter of pure gossip, I would back Our Club against the Sorosis or any women's club in existence. Whenever you see

in our drawing-room four or five young fellows lounging in easy-chairs, cigar in hand, and now and then bringing their heads together over the small round Japanese table which is always the pivot of these social circles, you may be sure that they are discussing Tom's engagement, or Dick's extravagance, or Harry's hopeless passion for the younger Miss Fleurdelys. It is here old Tappleton gets execrated for that everlasting *bon mot* of his which was quite a success at dinner-parties forty years ago; it is here the belle of the season passes under the scalpels of merciless young surgeons; it is here O's financial condition is handled in a way that would make O's hair stand on end; it is here, in short, that everything is canvassed — everything that happens in our set, I mean, much that never happens, and a great deal that could not possibly happen. It was at Our Club that I learned the particulars of the Van Twiller affair.

It was great entertainment to Our Club, the Van Twiller affair, though it was rather a joyless thing, I fancy, for Van Twiller. In order to understand the case fully, it should be understood that Ralph Van Twiller is one of the proudest and most sensitive men living. He is a lineal descendant of Wouter Van Twiller, the famous old Dutch governor of New York

— Nieuw Amsterdam, as it was then; his ancestors have always been burgomasters or admirals or generals, and his mother is the Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller whose magnificent place will be pointed out to you on the right bank of the Hudson, as you pass up the historic river towards Idlewild. Ralph is about twenty-five years old. Birth made him a gentleman, and the rise of real estate — some of it in the family since the old governor's time — made him a millionaire. It was a kindly fairy that stepped in and made him a good fellow also. Fortune, I take it, was in her most jocund mood when she heaped her gifts in this fashion on Van Twiller, who was, and will be again, when this cloud blows over, the flower of Our Club.

About a year ago there came a whisper — if the word "whisper" is not too harsh a term to apply to what seemed a mere breath floating gently through the atmosphere of the billiard-room — imparting the intelligence that Van Twiller was in some kind of trouble. Just as everybody suddenly takes to wearing square-toed boots, or to drawing his neckscarf through a ring, so it became all at once the fashion, without any preconcerted agreement, for everybody to speak of Van Twiller as a man in some way under a cloud. But what the cloud was, and how he got under it, and why he did not

get away from it, were points that lifted themselves into the realm of pure conjecture. There was no man in the club with strong enough wing to his imagination to soar to the supposition that Van Twiller was embarrassed in money matters. Was he in love? That appeared nearly as improbable; for if he had been in love all the world — that is, perhaps a hundred first families — would have known all about it instantly.

"He has the symptoms," said Delaney, laughing. "I remember once when Jack Flemming" —

"Ned!" cried Flemming, "I protest against any allusion to that business."

This was one night when Van Twiller had wandered into the club, turned over the magazines absently in the reading-room, and wandered out again without speaking ten words. The most careless eye would have remarked the great change that had come over Van Twiller. Now and then he would play a game of billiards with De Peyster or Haseltine, or stop to chat a moment in the vestibule with old Duane; but he was an altered man. When at the club, he was usually to be found in the small smoking-room up-stairs, seated on a fauteuil fast asleep, with the last number of The Dramatic News in his hand. Once, if you

went to two or three places of an evening, you were certain to meet Van Twiller at them all. You seldom met him in society now.

By and by came whisper number two — a whisper more emphatic than number one, but still untraceable to any tangible mouth-piece. This time the whisper said that Van Twiller *was* in love. But with whom? The list of possible Mrs. Van Twillers was carefully examined by experienced hands, and a check placed against a fine old Knickerbocker name here and there, but nothing satisfactory arrived at. Then that same still small voice of rumor, but now with an easily detected staccato sharpness to it, said that Van Twiller was in love — with an actress! Van Twiller, whom it had taken all these years and all this waste of raw material in the way of ancestors to bring to perfection — Ralph Van Twiller, the net result and flower of his race, the descendant of Wouter, the son of Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller — in love with an actress! That was too ridiculous to be believed — and so everybody believed it.

Six or seven members of the club abruptly discovered in themselves an unsuspected passion for the histrionic art. In squads of two or three they stormed successively all the theatres in town — Booth's, Wallack's, Daly's Fifth

Avenue (not burnt down then), and the Grand Opera House. Even the shabby homes of the drama over in the Bowery, where the Germanic Thespis has not taken out his naturalization papers, underwent rigid exploration. But no clue was found to Van Twiller's mysterious attachment. The *opéra bouffe*, which promised the widest field for investigation, produced absolutely nothing, not even a crop of suspicions. One night, after several weeks of this, Delaney and I fancied that we caught sight of Van Twiller in the private box of an up-town theatre, where some thrilling trapeze performance was going on, which we did not care to sit through; but we concluded afterwards that it was only somebody who looked like him. Delaney, by the way, was unusually active in this search. I dare say he never quite forgave Van Twiller for calling him Muslin Delaney. Ned is fond of ladies' society, and that 's a fact.

The Cimmerian darkness which surrounded Van Twiller's inamorata left us free to indulge in the wildest conjectures. Whether she was black-tressed Melpomene, with bowl and dagger, or Thalia, with the fair hair and the laughing face, was only to be guessed at. It was popularly conceded, however, that Van Twiller was on the point of forming a dreadful *mésalliance*.

Up to this period he had visited the club regularly. Suddenly he ceased to appear. He was not to be seen on Fifth Avenue, or in the Central Park, or at the houses he generally frequented. His chambers — and mighty comfortable chambers they were — on Thirty-fourth Street were deserted. He had dropped out of the world, shot like a bright particular star from his orbit in the heaven of the best society.

The following conversation took place one night in the smoking-room : —

"Where 's Van Twiller ? "

"Who 's seen Van Twiller ? "

"What has become of Van Twiller ? "

"Perhaps he has got a touch of the gout," suggested somebody.

"What, Van Twiller ? Why, he 's the most abstemious of men."

"He inherited the gout," observed De Peyster. "The dear boy says that it is one of his 'ancestral achers.' "

Delaney picked up The Evening Post, and read — with a solemnity that betrayed young Firkins into exclaiming, "By Jove, now ! " —

"Married, on the 10th instant, by the Rev. Friar Laurence, at the residence of the bride's uncle, Montague Capulet, Esq., Miss Adrienne

Le Couvreur to Mr. Ralph Van Twiller, both of this city. No cards."

"Free List suspended," murmured De Peyster.

"It strikes me," said Frank Livingstone, who had been ruffling the leaves of a magazine at the other end of the table, "that you fellows are in a great fever about Van Twiller."

"So we are."

"Well, he has simply gone out of town."

"Where?"

"Up to the old homestead on the Hudson."

"It 's an odd time of year for a fellow to go into the country."

"He has gone to visit his mother," said Livingstone.

"In February?"

"I did n't know, Delaney, that there was any statute in force prohibiting a man from visiting his mother in February if he wants to."

Delaney made some light remark about the pleasure of communing with Nature with a cold in her head, and the topic was dropped.

Livingstone was hand in glove with Van Twiller, and if any man shared his confidence it was Livingstone. He was aware of the gossip and speculation that had been rife in the club, but he either was not at liberty or did not

think it worth while to relieve our curiosity. In the course of a week or two it was reported that Van Twiller was going to Europe; and go he did. A dozen of us went down to the Scythia to see him off. It was refreshing to have something as positive as the fact that Van Twiller had sailed.

II

Shortly after Van Twiller's departure the whole thing came out. Whether Livingstone found the secret too heavy a burden, or whether it transpired through some indiscretion on the part of Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller, I cannot say; but one evening the entire story was in the possession of the club.

Van Twiller had actually been very deeply interested — not in an actress, for the legitimate drama was not her humble walk in life, but — in Mademoiselle Olympe Zabriski, whose really perilous feats on the trapeze had astonished New York the year before, though they had failed to attract Delaney and me the night we wandered into the up-town theatre on the trail of Van Twiller's mystery.

That a man like Van Twiller should be fascinated even for an instant by a common circus-girl seems incredible; but it is always the incredible thing that happens. Besides, Mademoiselle Olympe was not a common circus-girl; she was a most daring and startling gymnaste, with a beauty and a grace of movement that

gave to her audacious performance almost an air of prudery. Watching her wondrous dexterity and pliant strength, both exercised without apparent effort, it seemed the most natural proceeding in the world that she should do those unpardonable things. She had a way of melting from one graceful posture into another, like the dissolving figures thrown from a stereopticon. She was a lithe, radiant shape out of the Grecian mythology, now poised up there above the gaslights, and now gleaming through the air like a slender gilt arrow.

I am describing Mademoiselle Olympe as she appeared to Van Twiller on the first occasion when he strolled into the theatre where she was performing. To me she was a girl of eighteen or twenty years of age (may be she was much older, for pearl-powder and distance keep these people perpetually young), slightly but exquisitely built, with sinews of silver wire; rather pretty, perhaps, after a manner, but showing plainly the effects of the exhaustive drafts she was making on her physical vitality. Now, Van Twiller was an enthusiast on the subject of calisthenics. "If I had a daughter," Van Twiller used to say, "I would n't send her to a boarding-school, or a nunnery; I 'd send her to a gymnasium for the first five years. Our American women have no physique. They

are lilies, pallid, pretty — and perishable. You marry an American woman, and what do you marry? A headache. Look at English girls. They are at least roses, and last the season through."

Walking home from the theatre that first night, it flitted through Van Twiller's mind that if he could give this girl's set of nerves and muscles to any one of the two hundred high-bred women he knew, he would marry her on the spot and worship her forever.

The following evening he went to see Mademoiselle Olympe again. "Olympe Zabriski," he soliloquized, as he sauntered through the lobby — "what a queer name! Olympe is French, and Zabriski is Polish. It is her *nom de guerre*, of course; her real name is probably Sarah Jones. What kind of creature can she be in private life, I wonder? I wonder if she wears that costume all the time, and if she springs to her meals from a horizontal bar. Of course she rocks the baby to sleep on the trapeze." And Van Twiller went on making comical domestic tableaux of Mademoiselle Zabriski, like the clever, satirical dog he was, until the curtain rose.

This was on a Friday. There was a matinée the next day, and he attended that, though he had secured a seat for the usual evening enter-

tainment. Then it became a habit of Van Twiller's to drop into the theatre for half an hour or so every night, to assist at the interlude, in which she appeared. He cared only for her part of the programme, and timed his visits accordingly. It was a surprise to himself when he reflected, one morning, that he had not missed a single performance of Mademoiselle Olympe for nearly two weeks.

"This will never do," said Van Twiller. "Olympe" — he called her Olympe, as if she were an old acquaintance, and so she might have been considered by that time — "is a wonderful creature; but this will never do. Van, my boy, you must reform this altogether."

But half past nine that night saw him in his accustomed orchestra chair, and so on for another week. A habit leads a man so gently in the beginning that he does not perceive he is led — with what silken threads and down what pleasant avenues it leads him! By and by the soft silk threads become iron chains, and the pleasant avenues Avernus!

Quite a new element had lately entered into Van Twiller's enjoyment of Mademoiselle Olympe's ingenious feats — a vaguely born apprehension that she might slip from that swinging bar; that one of the thin cords supporting it might snap, and let her go headlong from

the dizzy height. Now and then, for a terrible instant, he would imagine her lying a glittering, palpitating heap at the footlights, with no color in her lips! Sometimes it seemed as if the girl were tempting this kind of fate. It was a hard, bitter life, and nothing but poverty and sordid misery at home could have driven her to it. What if she should end it all some night, by just unclasping that little hand? It looked so small and white from where Van Twiller sat!

This frightful idea fascinated while it chilled him, and helped to make it nearly impossible for him to keep away from the theatre. In the beginning his attendance had not interfered with his social duties or pleasures; but now he came to find it distasteful after dinner to do anything but read, or walk the streets aimlessly, until it was time to go to the play. When that was over, he was in no mood to go anywhere but to his rooms. So he dropped away by insensible degrees from his habitual haunts, was missed, and began to be talked about at the club. Catching some intimation of this, he ventured no more in the orchestra stalls, but shrouded himself behind the draperies of the private box in which Delaney and I thought we saw him on one occasion.

Now, I find it very perplexing to explain what

Van Twiller was wholly unable to make clear to himself. He was not in love with Mademoiselle Olympe. He had no wish to speak to her, or to hear her speak. Nothing could have been easier, and nothing further from his desire, than to know her personally. A Van Twiller personally acquainted with a strolling female acrobat! Good heavens! That was something possible only with the discovery of perpetual motion. Taken from her theatrical setting, from her lofty perch, so to say, on the trapeze-bar, Olympe Zabriski would have shocked every aristocratic fibre in Van Twiller's body. He was simply fascinated by her marvellous grace and *élan*, and the magnetic recklessness of the girl. It was very young in him and very weak, and no member of the Sorosis, or all the Sorosisters together, could have been more severe on Van Twiller than he was on himself. To be weak, and to know it, is something of a punishment for a proud man. Van Twiller took his punishment, and went to the theatre, regularly.

"When her engagement comes to an end," he meditated, "that will finish the business."

Mademoiselle Olympe's engagement finally did come to an end, and she departed. But her engagement had been highly beneficial to the treasury-chest of the up-town theatre, and

before Van Twiller could get over missing her she had returned from a short Western tour, and her immediate reappearance was underlined on the play-bills.

On a dead-wall opposite the windows of Van Twiller's sleeping-room there appeared, as if by necromancy, an aggressive poster with MADEMOISELLE OLYMPE ZABRISKI on it in letters at least a foot high. This thing stared him in the face when he woke up, one morning. It gave him a sensation as if she had called on him overnight, and left her card.

From time to time through the day he regarded that poster with a sardonic eye. He had resolved not to repeat the folly of the previous month. To say that this moral victory cost him nothing would be to deprive it of merit. It cost him many internal struggles. It is a fine thing to see a man seizing his temptation by the throat, and wrestling with it, and trampling it under foot like St. Anthony. This was the spectacle Van Twiller was exhibiting to the angels.

The evening Mademoiselle Olympe was to make her reappearance, Van Twiller, having dined at the club, and feeling more like himself than he had felt for weeks, returned to his chamber, and, putting on dressing-gown and slippers, piled up the greater portion of his

library about him, and fell to reading assiduously. There is nothing like a quiet evening at home with some slight intellectual occupation, after one's feathers have been stroked the wrong way.

When the lively French clock on the mantelpiece — a base of malachite surmounted by a flying bronze Mercury with its arms spread gracefully on the air, and not remotely suggestive of Mademoiselle Olympe in the act of executing her grand flight from the trapeze — when the clock, I repeat, struck nine, Van Twiller paid no attention to it. That was certainly a triumph. I am anxious to render Van Twiller all the justice I can, at this point of the narrative, inasmuch as when the half hour sounded musically, like a crystal ball dropping into a silver bowl, he rose from the chair automatically, thrust his feet into his walking-shoes, threw his overcoat across his arm, and strode out of the room.

To be weak and to scorn your weakness, and not to be able to conquer it, is, as has been said, a hard thing; and I suspect it was not with unalloyed satisfaction that Van Twiller found himself taking his seat in the back part of the private box night after night during the second engagement of Mademoiselle Olympe. It was so easy not to stay away!

In this second edition of Van Twiller's fatuity, his case was even worse than before. He not only thought of Olympe quite a number of times between breakfast and dinner, he not only attended the interlude regularly, but he began, in spite of himself, to occupy his leisure hours at night by dreaming of her. This was too much of a good thing, and Van Twiller regarded it so. Besides, the dream was always the same — a harrowing dream, a dream singularly adapted to shattering the nerves of a man like Van Twiller. He would imagine himself seated at the theatre (with all the members of Our Club in the parquet), watching Mademoiselle Olympe as usual, when suddenly that young lady would launch herself desperately from the trapeze, and come flying through the air like a firebrand hurled at his private box. Then the unfortunate man would wake up with cold drops standing on his forehead.

There is one redeeming feature in this infatuation of Van Twiller's which the sober moralist will love to look upon — the serene unconsciousness of the person who caused it. She went through her rôle with admirable aplomb, drew her salary, it may be assumed, punctually, and appears from first to last to have been ignorant that there was a miserable slave wearing her chains nightly in the left-hand proscenium-box.

That Van Twiller, haunting the theatre with the persistency of an ex-actor, conducted himself so discreetly as not to draw the fire of Mademoiselle Olympe's blue eyes shows that Van Twiller, however deeply under a spell, was not in love. I say this, though I think if Van Twiller had not been Van Twiller, if he had been a man of no family and no position and no money, if New York had been Paris and Thirty-fourth Street a street in the Latin Quarter — but it is useless to speculate on what might have happened. What did happen is sufficient.

It happened, then, in the second week of Queen Olympe's second unconscious reign, that an appalling Whisper floated up the Hudson, effected a landing at a point between Spuyten Duyvel Creek and Cold Spring, and sought out a stately mansion of Dutch architecture standing on the bank of the river. The Whisper straightway informed the lady dwelling in this mansion that all was not well with the last of the Van Twillers; that he was gradually estranging himself from his peers, and wasting his nights in a play-house watching a misguided young woman turning unmaidenly somersaults on a piece of wood attached to two ropes.

Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller came down to town by the next train to look into this little matter.

She found the flower of the family taking an early breakfast, at 11 A. M., in his cosey apartments on Thirty-fourth Street. With the least possible circumlocution she confronted him with what rumor had reported of his pursuits, and was pleased, but not too much pleased, when he gave her an exact account of his relations with Mademoiselle Zabriski, neither concealing nor qualifying anything. As a confession, it was unique, and might have been a great deal less entertaining. Two or three times in the course of the narrative, the matron had some difficulty in preserving the gravity of her countenance. After meditating a few minutes, she tapped Van Twiller softly on the arm with the tip of her parasol, and invited him to return with her the next day up the Hudson and make a brief visit at the home of his ancestors. He accepted the invitation with outward alacrity and inward disgust.

When this was settled, and the worthy lady had withdrawn, Van Twiller went directly to the establishment of Messrs. Ball, Black and Company, and selected, with unerring taste, the finest diamond bracelet procurable. For his mother? Dear me, no! She had the family jewels.

I would not like to state the enormous sum Van Twiller paid for this bracelet. It was

such a clasp of diamonds as would have hastened the pulsation of a patrician wrist. It was such a bracelet as Prince Camaralzaman might have sent to the Princess Badoura, and the Princess Badoura — might have been very glad to get.

In the fragrant Levant morocco case, where these happy jewels lived when they were at home, Van Twiller thoughtfully placed his card, on the back of which he had written a line begging Mademoiselle Olympe Zabriski to accept the accompanying trifle from one who had witnessed her graceful performances with interest and pleasure. This was not done inconsiderately. "Of course I must enclose my card, as I would to any lady," Van Twiller had said to himself. "A Van Twiller can neither write an anonymous letter nor make an anonymous present." Blood entails its duties as well as its privileges.

The casket despatched to its destination, Van Twiller felt easier in his mind. He was under obligations to the girl for many an agreeable hour that might otherwise have passed heavily. He had paid the debt, and he had paid it *en prince*, as became a Van Twiller. He spent the rest of the day in looking at some pictures at Goupil's, and at the club, and in making a few purchases for his trip up the

Hudson. A consciousness that this trip up the Hudson was a disorderly retreat came over him unpleasantly at intervals.

When he returned to his rooms late at night, he found a note lying on the writing-table. He started as his eye caught the words "—— Theatre" stamped in carmine letters on one corner of the envelope. Van Twiller broke the seal with trembling fingers.

Now, this note some time afterwards fell into the hands of Livingstone, who showed it to Stuyvesant, who showed it to Delaney, who showed it to me, and I copied it as a literary curiosity. The note ran as follows —

MR VAN TWILLER DEAR SIR — i am verry greatfull to you for that Bracelett. it come just in the nic of time for me. The Mademoiselle Zabriski dodg is about Plaid out. my beard is getting to much for me. i shall have to grow a mustash and take to some other line of busyness, i dont no what now, but will let you no. You wont feel bad if i sell that Bracelett. i have seen Abrahams Moss and he says he will do the square thing. Pleas accep my thanks for youre Beautifull and Unexpected present.

Youre respectfull servent,

CHARLES MONTMORENCI WALTERS.

The next day Van Twiller neither expressed nor felt any unwillingness to spend a few weeks with his mother at the old homestead.

And then he went abroad.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

One morning as I was passing through Boston Common, which lies between my home and my office, I met a gentleman lounging along The Mall. I am generally preoccupied when walking, and often thrid my way through crowded streets without distinctly observing any one. But this man's face forced itself upon me, and a singular face it was. His eyes were faded, and his hair, which he wore long, was flecked with gray. His hair and eyes, if I may say so, were sixty years old, the rest of him not thirty. The youthfulness of his figure, the elasticity of his gait, and the venerable appearance of his head were incongruities that drew more than one pair of curious eyes towards him. He excited in me the painful suspicion that he had got either somebody else's head or somebody else's body. He was evidently an American, at least so far as the upper part of him was concerned — the New England cut of countenance is unmistakable — evidently a man

who had seen something of the world, but strangely young and old.

Before reaching the Park Street gate, I had taken up the thread of thought which he had unconsciously broken; yet throughout the day this old young man, with his unwrinkled brow and silvered locks, glided in like a phantom between me and my duties.

The next morning I again encountered him on The Mall. He was resting lazily on the green rails, watching two little sloops in distress, which two ragged ship-owners had consigned to the mimic perils of the Pond. The vessels lay becalmed in the middle of the ocean, displaying a tantalizing lack of sympathy with the frantic helplessness of the owners on shore. As the gentleman observed their dilemma, a light came into his faded eyes, then died out, leaving them drearier than before. I wondered if he, too, in his time, had sent out ships that drifted and drifted and never came to port; and if these poor toys were to him types of his own losses.

"That man has a story, and I should like to know it," I said, half aloud, halting in one of those winding paths which branch off from the pastoral quietness of the Pond, and end in the rush and tumult of Tremont Street.

"Would you?" exclaimed a voice at my side. I turned and faced Mr. H——, a neighbor of

mine, who laughed heartily at finding me talking to myself. "Well," he added reflectingly, "I can tell you this man's story; and if you will match the narrative with anything as curious, I shall be glad to hear it."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes and no. That is to say, I do not know him personally; but I know a singular passage in his life. I happened to be in Paris when he was buried."

"Buried!"

"Well, strictly speaking, not buried; but something quite like it. If you 've a spare half hour," continued my friend H——, "we 'll sit on this bench, and I will tell you all I know of an affair that made some noise in Paris a couple of years ago. The gentleman himself, standing yonder, will serve as a sort of frontispiece to the romance — a full-page illustration, as it were."

The following pages contain the story which Mr. H—— related to me. While he was telling it, a gentle wind arose; the miniature sloops drifted feebly about the ocean; the wretched owners flew from point to point, as the deceptive breeze promised to waft the barks to either shore; the early robins trilled now and then from the newly fringed elms; and the old young man leaned on the rail in the sunshine, little

dreaming that two gossips were discussing his affairs within twenty yards of him.

Three persons were sitting in a salon whose one large window overlooked the Place Vendôme. M. Dorine, with his back half turned on the other two occupants of the apartment, was reading the Journal des Débats in an alcove, pausing from time to time to wipe his glasses, and taking scrupulous pains not to glance towards the lounge at his right, on which were seated Mlle. Dorine and a young American gentleman, whose handsome face rather frankly told his position in the family. There was not a happier man in Paris that afternoon than Philip Wentworth. Life had become so delicious to him that he shrunk from looking beyond to-day. What could the future add to his full heart, what might it not take away? The deepest joy has always something of melancholy in it — a presentiment, a fleeting sadness, a feeling without a name. Wentworth was conscious of this subtile shadow that night, when he rose from the lounge and thoughtfully held Julie's hand to his lip for a moment before parting. A careless observer would not have thought him, as he was, the happiest man in Paris.

M. Dorine laid down his paper, and came for-

ward. "If the house," he said, "is such as M. Cherbonneau describes it, I advise you to close with him at once. I would accompany you, Philip, but the truth is, I am too sad at losing this little bird to assist you in selecting a cage for her. Remember, the last train for town leaves at five. Be sure not to miss it; for we have seats for Sardou's new comedy to-morrow night. By to-morrow night," he added laughingly, "little Julie here will be an old lady — it is such an age from now until then."

The next morning the train bore Philip to one of the loveliest spots within twenty miles of Paris. An hour's walk through green lanes brought him to M. Cherbonneau's estate. In a kind of dream the young man wandered from room to room, inspected the conservatory, the stables, the lawns, the strip of woodland through which a merry brook sang to itself continually; and, after lunching with M. Cherbonneau, completed the purchase, and turned his steps towards the station just in time to catch the express train.

As Paris stretched out before him, with its lights twinkling in the early dusk, and its spires and domes melting into the evening air, it seemed to Philip as if years had elapsed since he left the city. On reaching Paris he drove to his hôtel, where he found several letters

lying on the table. He did not trouble himself even to glance at their superscriptions as he threw aside his travelling surtout for a more appropriate dress.

If, in his impatience to return to Mlle. Dorine, the train had appeared to walk, the fiacre which he had secured at the station appeared to creep. At last it turned into the Place Vendôme, and drew up before M. Dorine's hôtel. The door opened as Philip's foot touched the first step. The valet silently took his cloak and hat, with a special deference, Philip thought; but was he not now one of the family?

"M. Dorine," said the servant slowly, "is unable to see Monsieur at present. He wishes Monsieur to be shown up to the salon."

"Is Mademoiselle" —

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Alone?"

"Alone, Monsieur," repeated the man, looking curiously at Philip, who could scarcely repress an exclamation of pleasure.

It was the first time that such a privilege had been accorded him. His interviews with Julie had always taken place in the presence of M. Dorine, or some member of the household. A well-bred Parisian girl has but a formal acquaintance with her lover.

Philip did not linger on the staircase; with a light heart, he went up the steps, two at a time, hastened through the softly lighted hall, in which he detected the faint scent of her favorite flowers, and stealthily opened the door of the salon.

The room was darkened. Underneath the chandelier stood a slim black casket on trestles. A lighted candle, a crucifix, and some white flowers were on a table near by. Julie Dorine was dead.

When M. Dorine heard the sudden cry that rang through the silent house, he hurried from the library, and found Philip standing like a ghost in the middle of the chamber.

It was not until long afterwards that Wentworth learned the details of the calamity that had befallen him. On the previous night Mlle. Dorine had retired to her room in seemingly perfect health, and had dismissed her maid with a request to be awakened early the next morning. At the appointed hour the girl entered the chamber. Mlle. Dorine was sitting in an armchair, apparently asleep. The candle in the *bougeoir* had burnt down to the socket; a book lay half open on the carpet at her feet. The girl started when she saw that the bed had not been occupied, and that her mistress still wore an evening dress. She rushed to Mlle.

Dorine's side. It was not slumber; it was death.

Two messages were at once despatched to Philip, one to the station at G——, the other to his hôtel. The first missed him on the road, the second he had neglected to open. On his arrival at M. Dorine's house, the valet, under the supposition that Wentworth had been advised of Mlle. Dorine's death, broke the intelligence with awkward cruelty, by showing him directly to the salon.

Mlle. Dorine's wealth, her beauty, the suddenness of her death, and the romance that had in some way attached itself to her love for the young American drew crowds to witness the funeral ceremonies, which took place in the church in the Rue d'Aguesseau. The body was to be laid in M. Dorine's tomb, in the cemetery of Montmartre.

This tomb requires a few words of description. First there was a grating of filigraned iron; through this you looked into a small vestibule or hall, at the end of which was a massive door of oak opening upon a short flight of stone steps descending into the tomb. The vault was fifteen or twenty feet square, ingeniously ventilated from the ceiling, but unlighted. It contained two sarcophagi: the first held the remains of Madame Dorine, long since dead;

the other was new, and bore on one side the letters J. D., in monogram, interwoven with fleurs-de-lis.

The funeral train stopped at the gate of the small garden that enclosed the place of burial, only the immediate relatives following the bearers into the tomb. A slender wax candle, such as is used in Catholic churches, burnt at the foot of the uncovered sarcophagus, casting a dim glow over the centre of the apartment, and deepening the shadows which seemed to huddle together in the corners. By this flickering light the coffin was placed in its granite shell, the heavy slab laid over it reverently, and the oaken door swung on its rusty hinges, shutting out the uncertain ray of sunshine that had ventured to peep in on the darkness.

M. Dorine, muffled in his cloak, threw himself on the back seat of the landau, too abstracted in his grief to observe that he was the only occupant of the vehicle. There was a sound of wheels grating on the gravelled avenue, and then all was silence again in the cemetery of Montmartre. At the main entrance the carriages parted company, dashing off into various streets at a pace that seemed to express a sense of relief.

The rattle of wheels had died out of the air when Philip opened his eyes, bewildered, like a

man abruptly roused from slumber. He raised himself on one arm and stared into the surrounding blackness. Where was he? In a second the truth flashed upon him. He had been left in the tomb! While kneeling on the farther side of the stone box, perhaps he had fainted, and during the last solemn rites his absence had been unnoticed.

His first emotion was one of natural terror. But this passed as quickly as it came. Life had ceased to be so very precious to him; and if it were his fate to die at Julie's side, was not that the fulfilment of the desire which he had expressed to himself a hundred times that morning? What did it matter, a few years sooner or later? He must lay down the burden at last. Why not then? A pang of self-reproach followed the thought. Could he so lightly throw aside the love that had bent over his cradle? The sacred name of mother rose involuntarily to his lips. Was it not cowardly to yield up without a struggle the life which he should guard for her sake? Was it not his duty to the living and the dead to face the difficulties of his position, and overcome them if it were within human power?

With an organization as delicate as a woman's he had that spirit which, however sluggish in repose, leaps with a kind of exultation to mea-

sure its strength with disaster. The vague fear of the supernatural, that would affect most men in a similar situation, found no room in his heart. He was simply shut in a chamber from which it was necessary that he should obtain release within a given period. That this chamber contained the body of the woman he loved, so far from adding to the terror of the case, was a circumstance from which he drew consolation. She was a beautiful white statue now. Her soul was far hence; and if that pure spirit could return, would it not be to shield him with her love? It was impossible that the place should not engender some thought of the kind. He did not put the thought entirely from him as he rose to his feet and stretched out his hands in the darkness; but his mind was too healthy and practical to indulge long in such speculations.

Philip, being a smoker, chanced to have in his pocket a box of *allumettes*. After several ineffectual essays, he succeeded in igniting one against the dank wall, and by its momentary glare perceived that the candle had been left in the tomb. This would serve him in examining the fastenings of the vault. If he could force the inner door by any means, and reach the grating, of which he had an indistinct recollection, he might hope to make himself heard.

But the oaken door was immovable, as solid as the wall itself, into which it fitted air-tight. Even if he had had the requisite tools, there were no fastenings to be removed; the hinges were set on the outside.

Having ascertained this, Philip replaced the candle on the floor, and leaned against the wall thoughtfully, watching the blue fan of flame that wavered to and fro, threatening to detach itself from the wick. "At all events," he thought, "the place is ventilated." Suddenly he sprang forward and extinguished the light.

His existence depended on that candle!

He had read somewhere, in some account of shipwreck, how the survivors had lived for days upon a few candles which one of the passengers had insanely thrown into the long-boat. And here he had been burning away his very life!

By the transient illumination of one of the tapers, he looked at his watch. It had stopped at eleven — but eleven that day, or the preceding night? The funeral, he knew, had left the church at ten. How many hours had passed since then? Of what duration had been his swoon? Alas! it was no longer possible for him to measure those hours which crawl like snails by the wretched, and fly like swallows over the happy.

He picked up the candle, and seated himself

on the stone steps. He was a sanguine man, but, as he weighed the chances of escape, the prospect appalled him. Of course he would be missed. His disappearance under the circumstances would surely alarm his friends; they would institute a search for him; but who would think of searching for a live man in the cemetery of Montmartre? The préfet of police would set a hundred intelligences at work to find him; the Seine might be dragged, *les misérables* turned over at the Morgue; a minute description of him would be in every detective's pocket; and he — in M. Dorine's family tomb!

Yet, on the other hand, it was here he was last seen; from this point a keen detective would naturally work up the case. Then might not the undertaker return for the candlestick, probably not left by design? Or, again, might not M. Dorine send fresh wreaths of flowers, to take the place of those which now diffused a pungent, aromatic odor throughout the chamber? Ah! what unlikely chances! But if one of these things did not happen speedily, it had better never happen. How long could he keep life in himself?

With his pocket-knife Wentworth cut the half-burned candle into four equal parts. "To-night," he meditated, "I will eat the first of these pieces; to-morrow, the second; to-morrow

evening, the third; the next day, the fourth; and then — then I 'll wait ! "

He had taken no breakfast that morning, unless a cup of coffee can be called a breakfast. He had never been very hungry before. He was ravenously hungry now. But he postponed the meal as long as practicable. It must have been near midnight, according to his calculation, when he determined to try the first of his four singular repasts. The bit of white-wax was tasteless; but it served its purpose.

His appetite for the time appeased, he found a new discomfort. The humidity of the walls, and the wind that crept through the unseen ventilator, chilled him to the bone. To keep walking was his only resource. A kind of drowsiness, too, occasionally came over him. It took all his will to fight it off. To sleep, he felt, was to die; and he had made up his mind to live.

The strangest fancies flitted through his head as he groped up and down the stone floor of the dungeon, feeling his way along the wall to avoid the sepulchres. Voices that had long been silent spoke words that had long been forgotten; faces he had known in childhood grew palpable against the dark. His whole life in detail was unrolled before him like a panorama; the changes of a year, with its burden of

love and death, its sweets and its bitternesses, were epitomized in a single second. The desire to sleep had left him, but the keen hunger came again.

"It must be near morning now," he mused; "perhaps the sun is just gilding the towers of Notre Dame; or may be a dull, drizzling rain is beating on Paris, sobbing on these mounds above me. Paris! it seems like a dream. Did I ever walk in its gay boulevards in the golden air? Oh, the delight and pain and passion of that sweet human life!"

Philip became conscious that the gloom, the silence, and the cold were gradually conquering him. The feverish activity of his brain brought on a reaction. He grew lethargic; he sunk down on the steps, and thought of nothing. His hand fell by chance on one of the pieces of candle; he grasped it and devoured it mechanically. This revived him. "How strange," he thought, "that I am not thirsty. Is it possible that the dampness of the walls, which I must inhale with every breath, has supplied the need of water? Not a drop has passed my lips for two days, and still I experience no thirst. That drowsiness, thank Heaven, has gone. I think I was never wide awake until this hour. It would be an anodyne like poison that could weigh down my eyelids. No doubt the dread of sleep has something to do with this."

The minutes were like hours. Now he walked as briskly as he dared up and down the tomb; now he rested against the door. More than once he was tempted to throw himself upon the stone coffin that held Julie, and make no further struggle for his life.

Only one piece of candle remained. He had eaten the third portion, not to satisfy hunger, but from a precautionary motive. He had taken it as a man takes some disagreeable drug upon the result of which hangs safety. The time was rapidly approaching when even this poor substitute for nourishment would be exhausted. He delayed that moment. He gave himself a long fast this time. The half-inch of candle which he held in his hand was a sacred thing to him. It was his last defence against death.

Finally, with such a sinking at heart as he had not known before, he raised it to his lips. Then he paused, then he hurled the fragment across the tomb, then the oaken door was flung open, and Philip, with dazzled eyes, saw M. Dorine's form sharply defined against the blue sky.

When they led him out, half blinded, into the broad daylight, M. Dorine noticed that Philip's hair, which a short time since was as black as a crow's wing, had actually turned

gray in places. The man's eyes, too, had faded ; the darkness had dimmed their lustre.

"And how long was he really confined in the tomb ?" I asked, as Mr. H—— concluded the story.

"*Just one hour and twenty minutes !*" replied Mr. H——, smiling blandly.

As he spoke, the Lilliputian sloops, with their sails all blown out like white roses, came floating bravely into port, and Philip Wentworth lounged by us, wearily, in the pleasant April sunshine.

Mr. H——'s narrative haunted me. Here was a man who had undergone a strange ordeal. Here was a man whose sufferings were unique. His was no threadbare experience. Eighty minutes had seemed like two days to him ! If he had really been immured two days in the tomb, the story, from my point of view, would have lost its tragic value.

After this it was natural that I should regard Mr. Wentworth with stimulated curiosity. As I met him from day to day, passing through the Common with that same introspective air, there was something in his loneliness which touched me. I wondered that I had not read before in his pale, meditative face some such

sad history as Mr. H—— had confided to me. I formed the resolution of speaking to him, though with no very lucid purpose. One morning we came face to face at the intersection of two paths. He halted courteously to allow me the precedence.

"Mr. Wentworth," I began, "I"—

He interrupted me.

"My name, sir," he said, in an off-hand manner, "is Jones."

"Jo-Jo-Jones!" I gasped.

"No, not Joseph Jones," he returned, with a glacial air — "Frederick."

A dim light, in which the perfidy of my friend H—— was becoming discernible, began to break upon my mind.

It will probably be a standing wonder to Mr. Frederick Jones why a strange man accosted him one morning on the Common as "Mr. Wentworth," and then dashed madly down the nearest foot-path and disappeared in the crowd.

The fact is, I had been duped by Mr. H——, who is a gentleman of literary proclivities, and has, it is whispered, become somewhat demented in brooding over the Great American Novel — not yet hatched. He had actually tried the effect of one of his chapters on me!

My hero, as I subsequently learned, was a commonplace young person, who had some

connection, I know not what, with the building of that graceful granite bridge which spans the crooked silver lake in the Public Garden.

When I think of the readiness with which Mr. H—— built up his airy fabric on my credulity, I feel half inclined to laugh, though I am deeply mortified at having been the unresisting victim of his Black Art.

QUITE SO

I

Of course that was not his name. Even in the State of Maine, where it is still a custom to maim a child for life by christening him Arioch or Shadrach or Ephraim, nobody would dream of calling a boy "Quite So." It was merely a nickname which we gave him in camp; but it stuck to him with such bur-like tenacity, and is so inseparable from my memory of him, that I do not think I could write definitely of John Bladburn if I were to call him anything but "Quite So."

It was one night shortly after the first battle of Bull Run. The Army of the Potomac, shattered, stunned, and forlorn, was back in its old quarters behind the earthworks. The melancholy line of ambulances bearing our wounded to Washington was not done creeping over Long Bridge; the blue smocks and the gray still lay in windrows on the field of Manassas;

and the gloom that weighed down our hearts was like the fog that stretched along the bosom of the Potomac, and enfolded the valley of the Shenandoah. A drizzling rain had set in at twilight, and, growing bolder with the darkness, was beating a dismal tattoo on the tent — the tent of Mess 6, Company A, –th Regiment, N.Y. Volunteers. Our mess, consisting originally of eight men, was reduced to four. Little Billy, as one of the boys grimly remarked, had concluded to remain at Manassas; Corporal Steele we had to leave at Fairfax Court-House, shot through the hip; Hunter and Suydam we had said good-by to that afternoon. "Tell Johnny Reb," says Hunter, lifting up the leather side-piece of the ambulance, "that I'll be back again as soon as I get a new leg." But Suydam said nothing; he only unclosed his eyes languidly and smiled farewell to us.

The four of us who were left alive and unhurt that shameful July day sat gloomily smoking our brier-wood pipes, thinking our thoughts, and listening to the rain pattering against the canvas. That, and the occasional whine of a hungry cur, foraging on the outskirts of the camp for a stray bone, alone broke the silence, save when a vicious drop of rain detached itself meditatively from the ridge-pole of the tent, and fell upon the wick of our tallow candle,

making it "cuss," as Ned Strong described it. The candle was in the midst of one of its most profane fits when Blakely, knocking the ashes from his pipe and addressing no one in particular, but giving breath, unconsciously as it were, to the result of his cogitations, observed that "it was considerable of a fizzle."

"The 'on to Richmond' business?"

"Yes."

"I wonder what they'll do about it over yonder," said Curtis, pointing over his right shoulder. By "over yonder" he meant the North in general and Massachusetts especially. Curtis was a Boston boy, and his sense of locality was so strong that, during all his wanderings in Virginia, I do not believe there was a moment, day or night, when he could not have made a bee-line for Faneuil Hall.

"Do about it?" cried Strong. "They'll make about two hundred thousand blue flannel trousers and send them along, each pair with a man in it — all the short men in the long trousers, and all the tall men in the short ones," he added, ruefully contemplating his own leg-gear, which scarcely reached to his ankles.

"That's so," said Blakely. "Just now, when I was tackling the commissary for an extra candle, I saw a crowd of new fellows drawing blankets."

"I say there, drop that!" cried Strong. "All right, sir, did n't know it was you," he added hastily, seeing it was Lieutenant Haines who had thrown back the flap of the tent, and let in a gust of wind and rain that threatened the most serious bronchial consequences to our discontented tallow dip.

"You 're to bunk in here," said the lieutenant, speaking to some one outside. The some one stepped in, and Haines vanished in the darkness.

When Strong had succeeded in restoring the candle to consciousness, the light fell upon a tall, shy-looking man of about thirty-five, with long, hay-colored beard and mustache, upon which the rain-drops stood in clusters, like the night-dew on patches of cobweb in a meadow. It was an honest face, with unworldly sort of blue eyes, that looked out from under the broad visor of the infantry cap. With a deferential glance towards us, the new-comer unstrapped his knapsack, spread his blanket over it, and sat down unobtrusively.

"Rather damp night out," remarked Blakely, whose strong hand was supposed to be conversation.

"Quite so," replied the stranger, not curtly, but pleasantly, and with an air as if he had said all there was to be said about it.

"Come from the North recently?" inquired Blakely, after a pause.

"Yes."

"From any place in particular?"

"Maine."

"People considerably stirred up down there?" continued Blakely, determined not to give up.

"Quite so."

Blakely threw a puzzled look over the tent, and seeing Ned Strong on the broad grin, frowned severely. Strong instantly assumed an abstracted air, and began humming softly—

"O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light."

"The State of Maine," observed Blakely, with a certain defiance of manner not at all necessary in discussing a geographical question, "is a pleasant State."

"In summer," suggested the stranger.

"In summer, I mean," returned Blakely with animation, thinking he had broken the ice. "Cold as blazes in winter, though — is n't it?"

The new recruit merely nodded.

Blakely eyed the man homicidally for a moment, and then, smiling one of those smiles of simulated gayety which the novelists inform us are more tragic than tears, turned upon him with withering irony.

"Trust you left the old folks pretty comfortable?"

"Dead."

"The old folks dead!"

"Quite so."

Blakely made an abrupt dive for his blanket, tucked it around him with painful precision, and was heard no more.

Just then the bugle sounded "lights out," — bugle answering bugle in far-off camps. When our not elaborate night-toilets were complete, Strong threw somebody else's old boot at the candle with infallible aim, and darkness took possession of the tent. Ned, who lay on my left, presently reached over to me, and whispered, "I say, our friend 'Quite so' is a garrulous old boy! He'll talk himself to death some of these odd times, if he is n't careful. How he *did* run on!"

The next morning, when I opened my eyes, the new member of Mess 6 was sitting on his knapsack, combing his blonde beard with a horn comb. He nodded pleasantly to me, and to each of the boys as they woke up, one by one. Blakely did not appear disposed to renew the animated conversation of the previous night; but while he was gone to make a requisition for what was in pure sarcasm called coffee, Curtis ventured to ask the man his name.

"Bladburn, John," was the reply.

"That 's rather an unwieldy name for every-day use," put in Strong. "If it would n't hurt your feelings, I 'd like to call you Quite So — for short. Don't say no, if you don't like it. Is it agreeable?"

Bladburn gave a little laugh, all to himself, seemingly, and was about to say, "Quite so," when he caught at the words, blushed like a girl, and nodded a sunny assent to Strong. From that day until the end, the sobriquet clung to him.

The disaster at Bull Run was followed, as the reader knows, by a long period of masterly inactivity, so far as the Army of the Potomac was concerned. McDowell, a good soldier, but unlucky, retired to Arlington Heights, and McClellan, who had distinguished himself in Western Virginia, took command of the forces in front of Washington, and bent his energies to reorganizing the demoralized troops. It was a dreary time to the people of the North, who looked fatuously from week to week for "the fall of Richmond;" and it was a dreary time to the denizens of that vast city of tents and forts which stretched in a semicircle before the beleaguered capital — so tedious and soul-wearing a time that the hardships of forced marches and the horrors of battle became desirable things to them.

Roll-call morning and evening, guard-duty, dress-parades, an occasional reconnoissance, dominoes, wrestling-matches, and such rude games as could be carried on in camp made up the sum of our lives. The arrival of the mail with letters and papers from home was the event of the day. We noticed that Bladburn neither wrote nor received any letters. When the rest of the boys were scribbling away for dear life, with drum-heads and knapsacks and cracker-boxes for writing-desks, he would sit serenely smoking his pipe, but looking out on us through rings of smoke with a face expressive of the tenderest interest.

"Look here, Quite So," Strong would say, "the mail-bag closes in half an hour. Ain't you going to write?"

"I believe not to-day," Bladburn would reply, as if he had written yesterday, or would write to-morrow: but he never wrote.

He had become a great favorite with us, and with all the officers of the regiment. He talked less than any man I ever knew, but there was nothing sinister or sullen in his reticence. It was sunshine — warmth and brightness, but no voice. Unassuming and modest to the verge of shyness, he impressed every one as a man of singular pluck and nerve.

"Do you know," said Curtis to me one day,

"that that fellow Quite So is clear grit, and when we come to close quarters with our Palmetto brethren over yonder, he'll do something devilish?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, nothing quite explainable; the exasperating coolness of the man, as much as anything. This morning the boys were teasing Muffin Fan [a small mulatto girl who used to bring muffins into camp three times a week, — at the peril of her life!] and Jemmy Blunt of Company K — you know him — was rather rough on the girl, when Quite So, who had been reading under a tree, shut one finger in his book, walked over to where the boys were skylarking, and with the smile of a juvenile angel on his face lifted Jemmy out of that and set him down gently in front of his own tent. There Blunt sat speechless, staring at Quite So, who was back again under the tree, pegging away at his little Latin grammar."

That Latin grammar! He always had it about him, reading it or turning over its dog's-eared pages at odd intervals and in out-of-the-way places. Half a dozen times a day he would draw it out from the bosom of his blouse, which had taken the shape of the book just over the left breast, look at it as if to assure himself it was all right, and then put the thing back. At night the volume lay beneath his pillow. The

first thing in the morning, before he was well awake, his hand would go groping instinctively under his knapsack in search of it.

A devastating curiosity seized upon us boys concerning that Latin grammar, for we had discovered the nature of the book. Strong wanted to steal it one night, but concluded not to. "In the first place," reflected Strong, "I have n't the heart to do it, and in the next place I have n't the moral courage. Quite So would placidly break every bone in my body." And I believe Strong was not far out of the way.

Sometimes I was vexed with myself for allowing this tall, simple-hearted country fellow to puzzle me so much. And yet, was he a simple-hearted country fellow? City bred he certainly was not; but his manner, in spite of his awkwardness, had an indescribable air of refinement. Now and then, too, he dropped a word or a phrase that showed his familiarity with unexpected lines of reading. "The other day," said Curtis, with the slightest elevation of eyebrow, "he had the cheek to correct my Latin for me." In short, Quite So was a daily problem to the members of Mess 6. Whenever he was absent, and Blakely and Curtis and Strong and I got together in the tent, we discussed him, evolving various theories to explain why he never wrote to anybody and why nobody ever wrote to him. Had the man com-

mitted some terrible crime, and fled to the army to hide his guilt? Blakely suggested that he must have murdered "the old folks." What did he mean by eternally conning that tattered Latin grammar? And was his name Bladburn, anyhow? Even his imperturbable amiability became suspicious. And then his frightful reticence! If he was the victim of any deep grief or crushing calamity, why did n't he seem unhappy? What business had he to be cheerful?

"It 's my opinion," said Strong, "that he 's a rival Wandering Jew; the original Jacobs, you know, was a dark fellow."

Blakely inferred from something Bladburn had said, or something he had not said — which was more likely — that he had been a schoolmaster at some period of his life.

"Schoolmaster be hanged!" was Strong's comment. "Can you fancy a schoolmaster going about conjugating baby verbs out of a dratted little spelling-book? No, Quite So has evidently been a — a — Blest if I can imagine *what* he 's been!"

Whatever John Bladburn had been, he was a lonely man. Whenever I want a type of perfect human isolation, I shall think of him, as he was in those days, moving remote, self-contained, and alone in the midst of two hundred thousand men.

II

THE Indian summer, with its infinite beauty and tenderness, came like a reproach that year to Virginia. The foliage, touched here and there with prismatic tints, drooped motionless in the golden haze. The delicate Virginia creeper was almost minded to put forth its scarlet buds again. No wonder the lovely phantom — this dusky Southern sister of the pale Northern June — lingered not long with us, but, filling the once peaceful glens and valleys with her pathos, stole away rebukefully before the savage enginery of man.

The preparations that had been going on for months in arsenals and foundries at the North were nearly completed. For weeks past the air had been filled with rumors of an advance; but the rumor of to-day refuted the rumor of yesterday, and the Grand Army did not move. Heintzelman's corps was constantly folding its tents, like the Arabs, and as silently stealing away; but somehow it was always in the same place the next morning. One day, at last, orders came down for our brigade to move.

"We're going to Richmond, boys!" shouted Strong, thrusting his head in at the tent; and we all cheered and waved our caps like mad. You see, Big Bethel and Bull Run and Ball's Bluff (the bloody B's, as we used to call them) had n't taught us any better sense.

Rising abruptly from the plateau, to the left of our encampment, was a tall hill covered with a stunted growth of red-oak, persimmon, and chestnut. The night before we struck tents I climbed up to the crest to take a parting look at a spectacle which custom had not been able to rob of its enchantment. There, at my feet, and extending miles and miles away, lay the camps of the Grand Army, with their watch-fires reflected luridly against the sky. Thousands of lights were twinkling in every direction, some nestling in the valley, some like fireflies beating their wings and palpitating among the trees, and others stretching in parallel lines and curves, like the street-lamps of a city. Somewhere, far off, a band was playing, at intervals it seemed; and now and then, nearer to, a silvery strain from a bugle shot sharply up through the night, and appeared to lose itself like a rocket among the stars — the patient, untroubled stars. Suddenly a hand was laid upon my arm.

"I'd like to say a word to you," said Bladburn.

With a little start of surprise, I made room for him on the fallen tree where I was seated.

"I may n't get another chance," he said. "You and the boys have been very kind to me, kinder than I deserve; but sometimes I 've fancied that my not saying anything about myself had given you the idea that all was not right in my past. I want to say that I came down to Virginia with a clean record."

"We never really doubted it, Bladburn."

"If I did n't write home," he continued, "it was because I had n't any home, neither kith nor kin. When I said the old folks were dead, I said it. Am I boring you? If I thought I was" —

"No, Bladburn. I have often wanted you to talk to me about yourself, not from idle curiosity, I trust, but because I liked you that rainy night when you came to camp, and have gone on liking you ever since. This is n't too much to say, when only Heaven knows how soon I may be past saying it or you listening to it."

"That 's it," said Bladburn hurriedly; "that 's why I want to talk with you. I 've a fancy that I sha'n't come out of our first battle."

The words gave me a queer start, for I had been trying several days to throw off a similar presentiment concerning him — a foolish presentiment that grew out of a dream.

"In case anything of that kind turns up," he continued, "I'd like you to have my Latin grammar here — you've seen me reading it. You might stick it away in a bookcase, for the sake of old times. It goes against me to think of it falling into rough hands or being kicked about camp and trampled underfoot."

He was drumming softly with his fingers on the volume in the bosom of his blouse.

"I didn't intend to speak of this to a living soul," he went on, motioning me not to answer him; "but something took hold of me to-night and made me follow you up here. Perhaps if I told you all, you would be the more willing to look after the little book in case it goes ill with me. When the war broke out I was teaching school down in Maine, in the same village where my father was schoolmaster before me. The old man when he died left me quite alone. I lived pretty much by myself, having no interests outside of the district school, which seemed in a manner my personal property. Eight years ago last spring a new pupil was brought to the school, a slight slip of a girl, with a sad kind of face and quiet ways. Perhaps it was because she wasn't very strong, and perhaps because she wasn't used over well by those who had charge of her, or perhaps it was because my life was lonely, that my heart

warmed to the child. It all seems like a dream now, since that April morning when little Mary stood in front of my desk with her pretty eyes looking down bashfully and her soft hair falling over her face. One day I look up, and six years have gone by — as they go by in dreams — and among the scholars is a tall girl of sixteen, with serious, womanly eyes which I cannot trust myself to look upon. The old life has come to an end. The child has become a woman and can teach the master now. So help me Heaven, I did n't know that I loved her until that day!

"Long after the children had gone home I sat in the school-room with my face resting on my hands. There was her desk, the afternoon shadows falling across it. It never looked empty and cheerless before. I went and stood by the low chair, as I had stood hundreds of times. On the desk was a pile of books, ready to be taken away, and among the rest a small Latin grammar which we had studied together. What little despairs and triumphs and happy hours were associated with it! I took it up curiously, as if it were some gentle dead thing, and turned over the pages, and could hardly see them. Turning the pages, idly so, I came to a leaf on which something was written with ink, in the familiar girlish hand. It was only

the words 'Dear John,' through which she had drawn two hasty pencil lines — I wish she had n't drawn those lines!" added Bladburn under his breath.

He was silent for a minute or two, looking off towards the camps, where the lights were fading out one by one.

"I had no right to go and love Mary. I was twice her age, an awkward, unsocial man, that would have blighted her youth. I was as wrong as wrong can be. But I never meant to tell her. I locked the grammar in my desk and the secret in my heart for a year. I could n't bear to meet her in the village, and kept away from every place where she was likely to be. Then she came to me, and sat down at my feet penitently, just as she used to do when she was a child, and asked what she had done to anger me; and then, Heaven forgive me! I told her all, and asked her if she could say with her lips the words she had written, and she nestled in my arms all a-trembling like a bird, and said them over and over again.

"When Mary's family heard of our engagement, there was trouble. They looked higher for Mary than a middle-aged schoolmaster. No blame to them. They forbade me the house, her uncles; but we met in the village and at the neighbors' houses, and I was happy, know-

ing she loved me. Matters were in this state when the war came on. I had a strong call to look after the old flag, and I hung my head that day when the company raised in our village marched by the school-house to the railroad station; but I could n't tear myself away. About this time the minister's son, who had been away to college, came to the village. He met Mary here and there, and they became great friends. He was a likely fellow, near her own age, and it was natural they should like each other. Sometimes I winced at seeing him made free of the home from which I was shut out; then I would open the grammar at the leaf where 'Dear John' was written up in the corner, and my trouble was gone. Mary was sorrowful and pale these days, and I think her folks were worrying her.

"It was one evening two or three days before we got the news of Bull Run. I had gone down to the burying-ground to trim the spruce hedge set round the old man's lot, and was just stepping into the enclosure, when I heard voices from the opposite side. One was Mary's, and the other I knew to be young Marston's, the minister's son. I did n't mean to listen, but what Mary was saying struck me dumb. *We must never meet again*, she was saying in a wild way. *We must say good-by here, for-*

ever, — good-by, good-by! And I could hear her sobbing. Then, presently, she said hurriedly, *No, no; my hand!* Then it seemed he kissed her hands, and the two parted, one going towards the parsonage, and the other out by the gate near where I stood.

"I don't know how long I stood there, but the night-dews had wet me to the bone when I stole out of the graveyard and across the road to the school-house. I unlocked the door, and took the Latin grammar from the desk and hid it in my bosom. There was not a sound or a light anywhere as I walked out of the village. And now," said Bladburn, rising suddenly from the tree-trunk, "if the little book ever falls in your way, won't you see that it comes to no harm, for my sake, and for the sake of the little woman who was true to me and did n't love me? Wherever she is to-night, God bless her!"

As we descended to camp, the watch-fires were burning low in the valleys and along the hillsides, and as far as the eye could reach the silent tents lay bleaching in the moonlight.

III

We imagined that the throwing forward of our brigade was the initial movement of a general advance of the army; but that, as the reader will remember, did not take place until the following March. The Confederates had fallen back to Centreville without firing a shot, and the national troops were in possession of Lewinsville, Vienna, and Fairfax Court-House. Our new position was nearly identical with that which we had occupied on the night previous to the battle of Bull Run — on the old turnpike road to Manassas, where the enemy was supposed to be in great force. With a field-glass we could see the Rebel pickets moving in a belt of woodland on our right, and morning and evening we heard the spiteful roll of their snare-drums.

Those pickets soon became a nuisance to us. Hardly a night passed but they fired upon our outposts, so far with no harmful result; but after a while it grew to be a serious matter. The Rebels would crawl out on all-fours from the wood into a field covered with underbrush,

and lie there in the dark for hours, waiting for a shot. Then our men took to the rifle-pits — pits ten or twelve feet long by four or five deep, with the loose earth banked up a few inches high on the exposed sides. All the pits bore names, more or less felicitous, by which they were known to their transient tenants. One was called "The Pepper-Box," another "Uncle Sam's Well," another "The Reb-Trap," and another, I am constrained to say, was named after a not-to-be-mentioned tropical locality. Though this rude sort of nomenclature predominated, there was no lack of softer titles, such as "Fortress Matilda" and "Castle Mary," and one had, though unintentionally, a literary flavor to it, "Blair's Grave," which was not popularly considered as reflecting unpleasantly on Nat Blair, who had assisted in making the excavation.

Some of the regiment had discovered a field of late corn in the neighborhood, and used to boil a few ears every day, while it lasted, for the boys detailed on the night-picket. The corn-cobs were always scrupulously preserved and mounted on the parapets of the pits. Whenever a Rebel shot carried away one of these *barbette* guns, there was swearing in that particular trench. Strong, who was very sensitive to this kind of disaster, was complaining

bitterly one morning, because he had lost three "pieces" the night before.

"There's Quite So, now," said Strong, "when a Minie-ball comes *ping!* and knocks one of his guns to flinders, he merely smiles, and does n't at all see the degradation of the thing."

Poor Bladburn! As I watched him day by day going about his duties, in his shy, cheery way, with a smile for every one and not an extra word for anybody, it was hard to believe he was the same man who, that night before we broke camp by the Potomac, had poured out to me the story of his love and sorrow in words that burned in my memory.

While Strong was speaking, Blakely lifted aside the flap of the tent and looked in on us.

"Boys, Quite So was hurt last night," he said, with a white tremor to his lip.

"What!"

"Shot on picket."

"Why, he was in the pit next to mine," cried Strong.

"Badly hurt?"

"Badly hurt."

I knew he was; I need not have asked the question. He never meant to go back to New England!

Bladburn was lying on the stretcher in the hospital-tent. The surgeon had knelt down by him, and was carefully cutting away the bosom of his blouse. The Latin grammar, stained and torn, slipped, and fell to the floor. Bladburn gave me a quick glance. I picked up the book, and as I placed it in his hand, the icy fingers closed softly over mine. He was sinking fast. In a few minutes the surgeon finished his examination. When he rose to his feet there were tears on the weather-beaten cheeks.

"My poor lad," he blurted out, "it's no use. If you've anything to say, say it now, for you've nearly done with this world."

Then Bladburn lifted his eyes slowly to the surgeon, and the old smile flitted over his face as he murmured —

"Quite so."

TWO BITES AT A CHERRY

I

As they both were Americans, and typical Americans, it ought to have happened in their own country. But destiny has no nationality, and consequently no patriotism; so it happened in Naples.

When Marcus Whitelaw strolled out of his hotel that May morning, and let himself drift with the crowd along the Strada del Duomo until he reached the portals of the ancient cathedral, nothing was more remote from his meditation than Mrs. Rose Mason. He had not seen her for fifteen years, and he had not thought of her, except in an intermittent fashion, for seven or eight. There had, however, been a period, covering possibly four years, when he had thought of little else. During that heavy interim he had gone about with a pain in his bosom — a pain that had been very keen at the beginning, and then had gradually

lost its edge. Later on, that invisible hand which obliterates even the deep-carved grief on headstones effectually smoothed out the dent in Whitelaw's heart.

Rose Jenness at nineteen had been singularly adapted to making dents in certain kinds of hearts. Her candor and unselfishness, her disdain of insincerity in others, and her unconsciousness of the spells she cast had proved more fatal to Whitelaw than the most studied coquetry would have done. In the deepest stress of his trouble he was denied the consolation of being able to reproach her with duplicity. He had built up his leaning tower of hopes without any aid from her. She had been nothing but frank and unmisleading from first to last. Her beauty she could not help. She came of a line of stately men and handsome women. Sir Peter Lely painted them in Charles the Second's time, and Copley found them ready for his canvas at the close of the colonial period. Through some remote cross of Saxon and Latin blood, the women of this family had always been fair and the men dark. In Rose Jenness the two characteristics flowered. When New England produces a blonde with the eyes of a brunette, the world cannot easily match her, especially if she have that rounded slenderness of figure which is one of our very best Americanisms.

Without this blended beauty, which came to perfection in her suddenly, like the blossoms on a fruit-tree, Whitelaw would have loved Rose all the same. Indeed, her physical loveliness had counted for little in his passion, though the loveliness had afterwards haunted him almost maliciously. That she was fair of person who had so many gracious traits of mind and disposition was a matter of course. He had been slower than others in detecting the charm that wrapped her as she slipped into womanhood. They had grown up together as children, and had known no separation, except during the three years Whitelaw was with the Army of the Potomac — an absence broken by several returns to the North on recruiting service, and one long sojourn after a dangerous hurt received at Antietam. He never knew when he began to love Rose, and he never knew the exact moment when he ceased to love her. But between these two indefinable points he had experienced an unhappiness that was anything but indefinite. It had been something tangible and measurable; and it had changed the course of his career.

Next to time, there is no surer medicine than hard work for the kind of disappointment we have indicated. Unfortunately for Whitelaw, he was moderately rich by inheritance, and when

he discovered that Rose's candid affection was not love, he could afford to indulge his wretchedness. He had been anxious for distinction, for her sake; but now his ambition was gone. Of what value to him were worldly prizes, if she refused to share them? He presently withdrew from the legal profession, in which he had given promise of becoming a brilliant pleader, who had pleaded so unsuccessfully for himself, and went abroad. This was of course after the war.

It was not her fault that all communication between them ceased then and there. He would have it so. The affair had not been without its bitterness for Rose. Whitelaw was linked in some way with every agreeable reminiscence of her life; she could not remember the time when she was not fond of him. There had been a poignancy in the regret with which she had seen the friend who was dear to her transforming himself into a lover for whom she did not care in the least. It had pained her to give him pain, and she had done it with tears in her eyes.

Eighteen months later, Rose was Mrs. Mason, tears and all. Richard Mason was a Pacific Railroad king *en herbe*, with a palace in San Francisco, whither he immediately transported his bride. The news reached Whitelaw

in Seville, and gave him a twinge. His love, according to his own diagnosis, was already dead; it was presumably, then, a muscular contraction that caused it to turn a little in its coffin. The following year some question of investment brought him back to the United States, where he travelled extensively, carefully avoiding California. He visited Salt Lake City, however, and took cynical satisfaction in observing what a large amount of connubial misery there was to the square foot. Yet when a rumor came to him, some time subsequently, that Rose herself was not very happy in her marriage, he had the grace to be sincerely sorry.

"The poor transplanted Rose!" he murmured. "She was too good for him; she was too good for anybody."

This was four years after she had refused to be his wife; time had brought the philosophic mind, and he could look back upon the episode with tender calmness, and the desire to do justice to every one. Meanwhile Rose had had a boy. Whitelaw's feelings in respect to him were complicated.

Seven or eight years went by, the greater part of which Whitelaw passed in England. There he heard nothing of Mrs. Mason, and when in America he heard very little. The marriage

had not been fortunate, the Masons were enormously wealthy, and she was a beauty still. The Delaneys had met her, one winter, at Santa Barbara. Her letters home had grown more and more infrequent, and finally ceased. Her father had died, and the family was broken up and scattered. Persons whom nobody knew occupied the old mansion on the slope of Beacon Hill. One of the last spells of the past was lifted for Whitelaw when he saw strange faces looking out of those sun-purpled window-panes.

If Whitelaw thought of Mrs. Mason at intervals, it was with less distinctness on each occasion; the old love-passage, when he recalled it of an evening over his cigar, or in the course of some solitary walk, had a sort of phantasmal quality about it. The sharp grief that was to have lasted forever had resolved itself into a painless memory. He was now on that chilly side of forty where one begins to take ceremonious leave of one's illusions, and prefers claret to champagne.

When the announcement of Richard Mason's death was telegraphed East, Whitelaw read the telegram in his morning paper with scarcely more emotion than was shown by the man who sat opposite him reading the particulars of the last homicide. This was in a carriage on the Sixth Avenue elevated railroad, for Whitelaw

chanced to be in New York at the moment, making preparations for an extended tour in Russia and its dependencies. The Russian journey proved richer in novelty than he had anticipated, and he remained nearly three years in the land of the Tsars. On returning to Western Europe he was seized with the humor to revisit certain of the Italian cities — Ravenna, Rome, Venice, and Naples. It was in Naples that he found himself on that particular May morning to which reference has been made.

Whitelaw had never before happened to be in the city during the *festa* of San Gennaro. There are three of these festivals annually — in May, September, and December. He had fallen upon the most picturesque of the series. The miracle of the Liquefaction of the Blood of St. Januarius was to take place at nine o'clock that forenoon in the cathedral, and it was a spectacle which Whitelaw had often desired to witness.

So it was that he followed the crowd along the sunny *strada*, and shouldered his way into the church, where the great candles were already lighted. The cool atmosphere of the interior, pleasantly touched with that snuffy, musky odor which haunts Italian churches, was refreshing after the incandescent heat outside.

He did not mind being ten or twelve minutes too early.

Whitelaw had managed to secure a position not far from the altar-rail, and was settling himself comfortably to enjoy the ceremony, with his back braced against a marble column, when his eyes fell upon the profile of a lady who was standing about five yards in advance of him in an oblique line.

II

For an instant that face seemed to Whitelaw a part of the theatric unreality which always impresses one in Roman Catholic churches abroad. The sudden transition from the white glare of the street into the semi-twilight of the spacious nave; the soft bloom of the stained windows; the carving and gilding of choir and reredos; the draperies and frescoes, and the ghostly forms of incense slowly stretching upward, like some of Blake's weird shapes, to blend themselves with the shadows among the Gothic arches — all these instantly conspire to lift one from the commonplace level of life. With such accessories, and in certain moods, the mind pliantly surrenders itself to the incredible.

During possibly thirty seconds, Whitelaw might have been mistaken for the mate of one of those half-length figures in alto-relievo set against the neighboring pilasters, so grotesque and wooden was his expression. Then he gave a perceptible start. That gold hair, in waves of its own on the low brows, the sombre eye-

lashes — he could not see her eyes from where he stood — the poise of the head, the modelling of the throat — who could that be but Rose Jenness? He had involuntarily eliminated the Mason element, for the sight of her had taken him straight back to the days when there were no Pacific Railroad despots.

Fifteen years (good heavens! was it fifteen years?) had not touched a curve of the tall, slight figure. He was struck by that, as she stood there with her satin basque buttoned up to the thread-lace neckerchief knotted under her chin, for an insidious chill lurked in the air. The garment fitted closely, accentuating every line of the slender waist and flower-like full bust. At the left of the corsage was a bunch of violets held by a small silver clasp — the selfsame violets, he was tempted to believe, that she had worn the evening he parted with her tragically in the back drawing-room of the house on Beacon Hill. Neither she nor they had faded. All the details of that parting flashed upon him with strange vividness: the figure-piece by Hunt above the funereal fireplace; the crimson India shawl hurriedly thrown over the back of a chair and trailing on the floor; Rose standing in the middle of the dimly lighted room and holding out to him an appealing hand, which he refused to take. He re-

membered noticing, as he went home dazed through the moonlight, that the crisp crocuses were in bloom in the little front yards of the houses on Mount Vernon Street. It was May then, and it was May now, and there stood Rose. As he gazed at her, a queer sense of old comradeship — the old friendship that had gone to sleep when love awakened — began softly to stir in his bosom.

Rose in Italy! Then he recollected one of the past rumors that had floated to him touching her desire for foreign travel, and Mason's sordid absorption in his railroad schemes. Now that she was untrammelled, she had come abroad. She had probably left home with her son soon after Mason's death, and had been flitting from one continental city to another ever since, in the tiresome American fashion. That might well have befallen without Whitelaw hearing of it in Russia. The lists of new arrivals were the things he avoided in reading Galignani, just as he habitually avoided the newly arrived themselves.

There was no hesitation in his mind as to the course he should pursue. The moment he could move he would go to Rose, and greet her without embarrassment or any *arrière pensée*. It was impracticable to move at present, for the people were packed about him as solidly as

dates in a crate. Meanwhile he had the freedom of his eyes. He amused himself with recognizing and classifying one by one certain evidences of individuality in Rose's taste in the matter of dress. The hat, so subdued in color and sparing of ornament as to make it a mystery where the rich effect came from — there was a great deal of her in that. He would have identified it at once as Rose's hat if he had picked it up in the Desert of Sahara. Noting this, and the long tan-colored gloves which reached in wrinkles to the elbow, and would have reached to the shoulder if they had been drawn out smooth, Whitelaw murmured to himself, "Rue de la Paix!" He had a sensation of contiguity to a pair of high-heeled kid boots with rosettes at the instep, such as are worn in all weathers by aristocratic shepherdesses in Watteau's pink landscapes. That, however, was an unprovoked incursion into the territory of conjecture, for Whitelaw could see only the upper portion of Rose.

He was glad, since accident had thrown them together, that accident had not done it in the first twelvemonth of Rose's widowhood. Any mortuary display on her part would, he felt, have jarred the wrong note in him, and spoiled the pleasure of meeting her. But she was out of mourning now; the man was dead,

had been dead three years, and ought to have lived and died in the pterodactyl period, to which he properly belonged. Here Whitelaw paused in his musing, and smiled at his own heat, with a transient humorous perception of it. Let the man go; what was the use of thinking about him?

Dismissing the late Richard Mason, who really had not been a prehistoric monster, and had left Mrs. Mason a large fortune to do what she liked with, Whitelaw fell to thinking about Rose's son. He must be quite thirteen years old, our friend reflected. What an absurdly young-looking woman Rose was to be the mother of a thirteen-year-old boy! — doubtless a sad scapegrace, answering to the definition which Whitelaw remembered that one of his strong-minded country-women had given of the typical bad boy — a boy who looks like his mother and behaves like his father. Did Rose's son look like his mother?

Just then Rose slightly turned her head, and Whitelaw fancied that he detected an inquiring, vaguely anxious expression in her features, as if she were searching for some one in the assemblage. "She is looking for young Mason," he soliloquized; which was precisely the fact. She glanced over the church, stared for an instant straight past Whitelaw, and then resumed

her former position. He had prepared himself to meet her gaze; but she had not seen him. And now a tall Englishman, with a single eyeglass that gleamed like a headlight, came and planted himself, as if with malice prepense, between the two Americans.

"The idiot!" muttered Whitelaw, through his closed teeth.

Up to the present point he had paid no attention whatever to St. Januarius. The apparition of his early love, in what might be called the bloom of youth, was as much miracle as he could take in at once. Moreover, the whole of her was here, and only a fragment of the saint. Whitelaw was now made aware, by an expectant surging of the crowd in front and the craning of innumerable necks behind him, that something important was on the tapis.

A priest, in ordinary non-sacramental costume, had placed on the altar, from which all but the permanent decorations had been removed, a life-size bust of St. Januarius in gold and silver, enclosing the remains of the martyr's skull. Having performed this act, the priest, who for the occasion represented the archbishop, took his stand at the left of the dais. Immediately afterwards a procession of holy fathers, headed by acolytes bearing lighted candelabra, issued from behind the high altar,

where the saint's relics are kept in a tabernacle on off days and nights. An imposing personage half-way down the file carried a tall brass monstrance, in which was suspended by a ring an oblong flat crystal flask, or case, set in an antique reliquary of silver, with handles at each end. This contained the phenomenal blood.

Having deposited the monstrance on the altar, the custodian reverently detached the relic, and faced the audience. As he held up the flask by the handles and slowly turned it round, those nearest could distinguish through the blurred surface a dark yellowish opaque substance, occupying about two thirds of the vessel. It was apparently a solid mass, which in a liquid form might have filled a couple of sherry glasses. The legend runs that the thoughtful Roman lady who gathered the blood from the ground with a sponge inadvertently let drop a bit of straw into the original phial. This identical straw, which appears when the lump is in a state of solution, is considered a strong piece of circumstantial evidence. It is a remarkable fact, and one that by itself establishes the authenticity of San Gennaro, that several of his female descendants always assist at the liquefaction — a row of very aged and very untidy Neapolitan ladies, to whom places of honor are given on these occasions.

Shut out from Rose, for the obnoxious Englishman completely blockaded her, Whitelaw lent himself with faintly stimulated interest to the ceremony, which was now well under way. He was doubtful of many things, and especially skeptical as to matters supernatural. Accepting the miracle at its own valuation — at par value, as he stated it — what conceivable profit could accrue to mankind from the smelting of that poor old gentleman's coagulated blood? How had all this mediæval mummery survived the darkness in which it was born!

With half listless eye Whitelaw watched the priest as he stood at the rail, facing the spectators and solemnly reversing the reliquary. From time to time he paused, and held a lighted candle behind the flask in order to ascertain if any change had taken place, and then resumed operations amid the breathless silence. An atmosphere charged with suspense seemed to have settled upon the vast throng.

Six — eight — ten minutes passed. The priest had several times repeated his investigation; but the burnt-sienna-like mass held to its consistency. In life St. Januarius must have been a person of considerable firmness, a quality which his blood appeared still to retain even after the lapse of more than fourteen centuries.

A thrill of disappointment and dismay ran

through the multitude. The miracle was not working, in fact had refused to work! The attendants behind the chancel rail wore perturbed faces. Two of the brothers turned to the altar and began saying the Athanasian Creed, while here and there a half breathed prayer or a deep muttering of protest took flight from the congregation; for the Neapolitans insist on a certain degree of punctuality in St. Januarius. Any unreasonable delay on his part is portentous of dire calamity to the city — earthquake or pestilence. The least that can be predicted is an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Even so late as the end of the eighteenth century, a failure of the miracle usually led to panic and violence. To-day such a result is hardly possible, though in the rare instances when the martyr procrastinates a little, the populace fall to upbraiding their patron saint with a vehemence that is quite as illogical in its way.

Whitelaw himself was nearly ripe to join in some such demonstration. Transfixed to the marble column — like a second St. Sebastian — and pierced with innumerable elbows, he had grown very impatient of the whole business. There was Rose within twenty feet of him, and he could neither approach her nor see her! He heartily wished that when Proconsul Dracontius threw St. Januarius to the lions in the

amphitheatre of Pozzuoli, the lions had not left a shred of him, instead of tamely lapping his hand. Then Dracontius would not have been obliged to behead the man; then that Roman lady would not have come along with her sponge; then he, Marcus Whitelaw, a free-born American citizen, would not have been kept standing there a lifetime waiting for an opportunity to say a word to his old love!

He felt that he had much to say to Rose. The barrier which had separated him from her all these years had been swept away. The whole situation was essentially changed. If she were willing to accept the friendship which she once stipulated as the only tie possible between them, he was ready to offer it to her now. If she had not altered, if she remained her old candid cordial self, what a treat it would be to him to act as her cicerone in Naples — for Naples was probably *terra incognita* to Rose. There were delightful drives along the Riviere di Chiaia; excursions to Pompeii, Baiæ, and Solfatara; trips by steamer to Capri, Sorrento, and Amalfi. He pictured the two of them drifting in a boat into the sappharine enchantment of the Blue Grotto at Capri — the three of them, rather; for "By Jove!" he reflected, "we should have to take the boy with us." This reflection somewhat dashed his

spirits. The juvenile Mason would be a little bore; and if he did n't look like his mother, and *did* look like his father, the youth would be a great bore.

Now as Whitelaw had never seen the late Mr. Mason, or even a counterfeit presentment of him, any resemblance that might chance to exist between the father and the son was not likely to prove aggressive. This reflection also occurred to Whitelaw, and caused him to smile. He had a touch of that national gift of humorous self-introspection which enables Americans, almost alone among human bipeds, to smile at their own expense.

While these matters were passing through his mind, and he had given up all hope of extricating himself from his predicament until the end of the ceremony, a sudden eddy swirled round the column, the crowd wavered and broke, and Whitelaw was free. The disintegration of the living mass was only momentary, but before it could close together again he had contrived to get three yards away from the site of his martyrdom. Further advance then became difficult. By dint of pushing and diplomatic elbowing he presently gained another yard. The goal was almost won.

A moment later he stood at Rose's side.

III

Rose had her head turned three quarters to the right, and was unaware that any one had supplanted the tall English gentleman recently looming on her left. Whitelaw drew a long breath, and did not speak at once, but stood biting his under lip with an air of comic irresolution. He was painfully conscious that it was comic. He had, in fact, fallen into an absurd perplexity. How should he address her? He did not quite dare to call her "Rose," and every fibre of his being revolted against calling her "Mrs. Mason." Yet he must address her in some fashion, and instantly. There was one alternative — not to address her. He bent down a little, and touched her lightly on the shoulder.

The lady wheeled sharply, with a movement that must have been characteristic of her, and faced him. There was no faltering or reservation in voice or manner as she exclaimed "Marc!" and gave one of the tan-colored gloves into his keeping for twenty seconds or so. She had spoken rather loud, forgetting circum-

stance and place in her surprise, and several of the masculine bystanders smiled sympathetically on *la bella Americana.* There was the old ring to her voice, and it vibrated musically on Whitelaw's ear.

"Rose," he said in an undertone, "I cannot tell you how glad I am of this. I begin to believe that things are planned for me better than I can plan them."

"This was planned charmingly — but it was odd to make us meet in Naples, when we have so much room at home to meet in."

"The odd feature of it to me is that it does n't appear odd. I don't see how anything else could have happened without breaking all the laws of probability."

"It seems much too good to be true," said Rose gayly.

She was unaffectedly happy over the encounter, and the manner of it. She had caused Whitelaw a deep mortification in days past, and though it had been the consequence of no fault of her own, had indeed been entirely Whitelaw's, she had always wanted the assurance of his forgiveness. That he had withheld through long years, and now he forgave her. She read the pardon in his voice and eyes. Rose scanned him a little curiously, though with no overt act of curiosity. He had grown stouter, but the

added fulness was not unbecoming: he used to be too spare for his stature. His sharp New England face belonged to a type that seldom loses its angles. The scar in the shape of a cross on his left cheek was decorative. The handsomely moulded upper lip was better without the mustache. There were silvery glints here and there where the chestnut hair was brushed back from the temples. These first few scattering snowflakes of time went well with his bronzed complexion; for he was as brown as an Indian, from travel. On the whole, fifteen years had decidedly adorned him.

"How long have you been here — in Naples, I mean?" questioned Whitelaw, again under his breath.

"A week; and you?"

"Since yesterday. I came chiefly for this *festa*."

"I did n't dream you were so devout."

"The conversion is recent; but henceforth I swear by St. Januarius through thick and thin, though as a general thing I prefer him thin — when it does n't take too long."

"If any one should hear you!" whispered Rose, glancing round furtively.

"Why, the Church itself does n't cling very strongly to the miracle nowadays, and would gladly be rid of it; but the simple folk of the

Santa Lucia quarter and the outlying volcanoes insist on having their St. Januarius. I imagine it would cost a revolution to banish him. Rose, when did you leave home?"

"Last March. Hush!" she added, laying a finger to her lip. "Something is happening in the chancel."

The martyr's blood had finally given signs of taking the proper sanguine hue, to the intense relief of the populace, from which arose a dull multitudinous murmur, like that of a distant swarm of bees. The priest, with a gleam of beatific triumph in his cavernous eyes, was holding the reliquary high aloft. The vast congregation swayed to and fro, and some tumult was created by devotees in the background endeavoring to obtain coignes of vantage nearer the altar.

"Surely, you have not trusted yourself alone in this place?" said Whitelaw.

"No, I 'm with you," Rose answered, smiling.

"But you did not come unattended?"

"Richard came with me; we got separated immediately on entering the cathedral, and lost each other."

"Richard — that is the name of your son," remarked Whitelaw, after a pause. The father's name!

"Yes, and I want you to see him. He's a fine fellow."

"I should like to see him," said Whitelaw perfunctorily.

"He is very clever, not like me."

"I hope he's as unaware of his cleverness as you are of yours, Rose."

"I am quite aware of mine. I only said that his was different. That spoils your compliment. He's to remain over here at school — in Germany — if I can make up my mind in the autumn to leave him. When do you return to America?"

"In the autumn," said Whitelaw promptly, a little to his own surprise, for until then he really had had no plan.

"Perhaps we can arrange to go back on the same steamer," suggested Rose. "We crossed in the Cuba, and liked her. She's advertised to sail on the 17th of September; how would that suit you, for example?"

The suggestion smiled upon Whitelaw, and he was about to reply, when a peal from the great organ, announcing the consummation of the miracle, reverberated through the church and cut him short. As the thunders died away, the voices of chanting priests ascended from the chancel, where some choir-boys were strewing rose-leaves over the marble steps leading to

the altar. At the same moment the boom of a heavy gun, fired from the ramparts of the Castel dell' Ovo, shook the windows. The city ordnance was saluting St. Januarius — a custom that has since fallen into desuetude.

"Look!" exclaimed Rose, laying her hand impulsively on Whitelaw's arm, "see the birds! That 's an exquisite fancy!"

A flock of sparrows had been let loose, and were beating the misty air with uncertain wings, darting hither and thither through the nave and under the arches, in search of resting-places on frieze and cornice and jutting stonework. Meanwhile the priest had stepped down from the dais and was passing among the people, who crowded round him to press their lips and foreheads to the flask enclosed in the reliquary. The less devotional, and those who had already performed the rite, were slowly wending their way to the various outlets on the *strada.*

"I am glad it 's over," declared Whitelaw.

"To think," observed Rose reflectively, "that he has got to go all through it again to-morrow!"

"Who?"

"That poor dear saint."

"Oh," laughed Whitelaw, "I thought you meant me. *He* does n't mind it; it 's his profession. There are objects more deserving of

your pity. I, for instance, who have no sort of talent for martyrdom. You should have seen me — pinned to that column, like an entomological specimen, for forty mortal minutes! I would n't go through it again for a great deal."

"Not for the sake of meeting an old friend?"

"It was the old friend that made it particularly hard. To be so near her, and not able to speak to her! And part of the time not to have even the consolation of seeing the sweep of the ring-dove's wing on the left side of her new Paris hat."

Rose looked up into his face, and smiled in a half absent way. She was far from averse to having a detail of her toilet noticed by those she liked. In former days Whitelaw had had a quick eye in such trifles, and his remark seemed to her a veritable little piece of the pleasant past, with an odd, suggestive flavor about it.

She had slipped her hand through his arm, and the pair were moving leisurely with the stream towards one of the leather-screened doors opening upon the vestibule. The manner in which Rose fell in with his step, and a certain subtile something he recognized in the light pressure of her weight, carried him, in his turn, very far back into the olden time. The

fifteen years, like the two and thirty years in Tennyson's lyric, were as a mist that rolls away. It appeared to Whitelaw as if they had never been separated, or had parted only yesterday. How naturally and sweetly she had picked up the dropped thread of the old friendship! The novelty of her presence had evaporated at the first words she had spoken; only the pleasure of it remained. To him there was nothing strange or unexpected in their wholly unexpected and entirely strange meeting. As he had told her, he did not see how anything else could have happened. Already he had acquired the habit of being with her!

"Good heavens!" he said to himself, "it can't be that I am falling in love with Rose over again!"

The idea brought a flickering smile to Whitelaw's lips, the idea of falling in love at first sight — after a decennium and a half!

"What are you smiling at?" she demanded, looking up alertly.

"I did n't know I was smiling."

"But you were; and an unexplained smile when two persons are alone together, with two thousand others, is as inadmissible as whispering in company."

Whitelaw glanced at her with an amused, partly embarrassed expression, and made no

response. They were passing at the instant through a narrow strip of daylight slanted from one of the great blazoned windows, and he was enabled to see Rose's face with more distinctness than he hitherto had done. If it had lost something of its springtide bloom and outline — and he saw that that was so — it had gained a beauty of a rarer and richer sort. There was a deeper lustre to the dark-fringed eyes, as if they had learned to think, and a greater tenderness in the curves of the mouth, as if it had learned to be less imperious. How handsome she was — handsomer than she had been at nineteen!

In his rapid survey, Whitelaw's eye had lighted on the small clasp holding the violets to her corsage — and rested there. The faint flush that came to his cheek gradually deepened.

"Is that the clasp I gave you when you were a girl?" he finally asked.

"You recognize it? — yes."

"And you 've kept the trifle all these centuries!"

"That 's not polite — when I was a girl, several hundred years ago! I kept it because it was a birthday gift; because it *was* a trifle; then from habit, and now the centuries have turned it into a bit of priceless *bric-à-brac*."

Somehow Rose's explanation did not seem to him quite so exquisite as the bare fact itself.

Whitelaw was now conscious of a very perceptible acceleration in the flow of the current that was bearing them towards the cathedral entrance. It was not his purpose that they should reach it just yet. Their brief dialogue, carried on in undertone, and the early part of it with ecclesiastical interruptions, had been desultory and unsatisfying. He should of course see much of Rose during her stay in Naples, for he had no intention of leaving it while she remained; but the opportunity of having her to himself might not re-occur, and he had certain things to say to her which could not be said under any other condition. So many opportunities of various kinds had escaped him in the course of life that he resolved not to let this one slip. On the right of the eastern transept, he remembered, was a heavenly little chapel — the chapel of the Seripandis — where they might converse without restraint, if once they could get there.

Watching his chance, Whitelaw began a skilful oblique movement, and in a few minutes the two found themselves free of the crowd and in front of a gilded iron fencing, the gate of which stood open.

"This is not the way out!" exclaimed Rose.

"I 'm aware of it," said Whitelaw.

"But we want to get out."

"You 've never visited the church before, have you, Rose ?"

"No."

"Then you ought to see some of the chapels. They contain things by Spagnoletto, Domenichino, and others. In this one, for instance, is an Assumption by Perugino. It would be a pity to miss that — now you are on the spot."

"I am afraid I have n't time for sightseeing," she answered, drawing out a diminutive watch and pressing a spring in the stem. "I 've an engagement at ten " —

"Well, that leaves you more than half an hour," he interrupted, glancing over Rose's shoulder at the time-piece.

"But meanwhile Richard will be searching for me everywhere."

"Then he can't fail to find you here," said Whitelaw adroitly. "He has probably given you up, however, and gone back to the hotel."

"Perhaps he has," assented Rose irresolutely.

"In which case, I will take you home, or wherever you wish to be taken, when it is necessary for you to go."

"Oh, I 'll not trouble you. The carriage was ordered to wait at the corner just below the

church — the driver was not able to get nearer. That was to be our point of rendezvous. I don't know — perhaps I ought to go now."

Rose stood a second or two in an attitude of pretty hesitation, with her hand resting on one of the spear-heads of the gate; then she stepped into the chapel.

IV

"It is not Perugino at his best," said Whitelaw, after a silence; "it has been restored in places, and not well done. I like some of his smaller canvases; but I don't greatly care for Perugino."

"Then why on earth have you dragged me in here to see it?" cried Rose.

"Because I care for you," he answered, smiling at the justice of her swift wrath. As he turned away from the painting, his countenance became grave.

"You have an original way of showing it. If I cared for any one, I would n't pick out objects of no interest for her to look at."

"Frankly, Rose, I was not willing to let you go so soon. I wanted a quiet half hour's talk with you. I had two or three serious things to say — things that have long been on my mind — and a chapel seemed the only fitting place to say them in."

This rather solemn exordium caused Rose to lift her eyelashes anxiously.

"I want to speak of the past," said Whitelaw.

"No, do not let us speak of that," she protested hurriedly.

"After all this time, Rose, I think I have a kind of right" —

"No, you have no right whatever" —

— "to ask your forgiveness."

"My forgiveness — for what?"

"For my long silence, and sullenness, and brutality generally. It was n't a crime in you not to love me in the old days, and I acted as if I regarded it as one. I was without any justification in going away from you in the mood I did that night."

"I was very, very sorry," said Rose gently.

"I should at once have accepted the situation, and remained your friend. That was a man's part, and I failed to play it. After a while, when I had recovered my reason, it was too late. It appears to be one of the conditions, if not the sole condition, of my existence that I should be too late. The occasion always gets away from me. When your — when I heard of Mr. Mason's death, if I had been another man I would have written to you, or sent you some sort of kindly message, for the old time's sake. The impulse to do so came to me three months afterwards. I sat down one day and began to write; then the futility and untimeliness of the whole thing struck me, and I tore up the letter."

"I wish you had not," said Rose. "A word from you then, or before Mr. Mason's death, would have been welcome to me. I was never willing to lose your friendship. After your first return from Europe, and you were seeing something of your own country, as every American ought to do, I hoped that you would visit San Francisco. I greatly desired that you should come and tell me, of your free will, that I was not to blame. If I had been, perhaps I would not have cared."

"You were blameless from beginning to end. I do not believe you ever said or did an insincere thing in your life, Rose. I simply misunderstood. The whole story lies in that. You were magnanimous to waste any thought whatever upon me. When I reflect on my own ungenerous attitude, I am ashamed to beg your pardon."

"I have not anything to forgive," Rose replied; and then she added, looking at him with a half rueful smile, "I suppose it was unavoidable, under the circumstances, that we should touch on this matter. Perhaps it was the only way to exorcise the ghost of the past; at all events, I am glad that you 've said what you have; and now let it go. Tell me about yourself."

"I wish I could. There 's no more biography to me than if I were Shakespeare."

"What have you done all this while?"

"Nothing."

"Where have you been?"

"Everywhere."

"No pursuit, no study, no profession?"

"Oh, yes; I am a professional nomad — an alien wherever I go. I'm an Englishman in America, and an American in England. They don't let up on me in either country."

"Is n't there a kind of vanity in self-disparagement, my friend? Seriously, if you are not doing your own case injustice, has n't this been a rather empty career? A colonel at twenty-four — and nothing ever after!"

"Precisely — just as if I had been killed at Antietam." He wanted to say, "on Beacon Hill."

"With your equipment, every path was open to you. Most men have to earn their daily bread with one hand, while they are working for higher things with the other. You had only the honors to struggle for. To give up one's native land, and spend years in aimless wandering from place to place — it seems downright wicked."

"I 've had some conscience in the matter," pleaded Whitelaw — "I might have written books of travel and made a stock-company of my *ennui*."

"You ought to have married, Marc," said Rose sententiously.

"I?" Whitelaw stared at her. How could Rose say a thing like that!

"Every man ought to marry," she supplemented.

"I admit the general proposition," he returned slowly, "but I object to the personal application. To the mass of mankind — meaning also womankind — marriage may be the only possible thing; but to the individual, it may be the one thing impossible. I would put the formula this way: Every one ought to wish to marry; some ought to be allowed to marry; and others ought to marry twice — to make the average good."

"That sounds Shakespearean — like your biography; but I don't think I have quite caught the idea."

"Perhaps it got tangled in the expression," said Whitelaw. "It was my purpose to pay a handsome tribute to matrimony, and to beg to be excused."

Rose remained silent a moment, with one finger pressed against her cheek, making a little round white dent in it, and her eyes fixed upon the kneeling figure of Cardinal Carafa at the left of Perugino's picture. Then she turned, and fixed her eyes upon Whitelaw's figure.

"Have you never," she asked, "have you never, in all your journeyings, met a woman whom you liked?"

"I cannot answer you," he replied soberly, "without treading on forbidden ground. May I do that? When I first came abroad I fancy I rather hated women — that was one of the mild manifestations of my general insanity. Later, my hatred changed to morbid fastidiousness. My early education had spoiled me. I have, of course, met many admirable women, and admired them — at a safe distance."

"And thrown away your opportunities."

"But if I loved no one?"

"Admiration would have served."

"I do not agree with you, Rose."

"A man may do worse than make what the world calls a not wholly happy marriage."

Whitelaw glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. Was that an allusion to the late Richard Mason? The directness was characteristic of Rose; but the remark was a trifle too direct for *convenance.* If there were any esoteric intent in the words, her face did not betray it. But women can look less self-conscious than men.

"It seems to me," she went on, "that even an unromantic, commonplace union would have been better than the lonely, irresponsible life

you have led, accepting your own statement of it — which I do not wholly. A man should have duties outside of himself; without them he is a mere balloon, inflated with thin egotism and drifting nowhere."

"I don't accept the balloon," protested Whitelaw, not taking kindly to Rose's metaphor. "That presupposes a certain internal specific buoyancy which I have not, if I ever had it. My type in the inanimate kingdom would be a diving-machine continually going down into wrecks in which there is apparently nothing to bring up. I would have it ultimately find the one precious ingot in the world."

"Oh, Marc," cried Rose earnestly, with just a diverting little touch of maternal solicitude in the gesture she made, "oh, Marc, I hope some day to see you happily married."

"You don't think it too late, then?"

"Too late? Why, you are only forty-three; and what if you were seventy-three? *On a l'âge de son cœur.*"

"Mine throws no light on the subject," said Whitelaw, with a thrill which he instantly repressed. "I suspect that my heart must be largely feminine, for it refuses to tell me its real age. At any rate, I do not trust it. Just now it is trying to pass itself off for twenty-five or thirty."

From time to time in the progress of this conversation a shadow, not attributable to any of the overhanging sculpture of the little Gothic chapel, had rested on Whitelaw's countenance. He had been assailed by strange surprises and conflicting doubts. Five or ten minutes before, the idea of again falling in love with Rose had made him smile. But was he not doing it, had he not done it, or, rather, had he not always loved her — more or less unconsciously? And Rose? Her very candor perplexed and baffled him, as formerly. She had always been a stout little Puritan, with her sense of duty; but that did not adequately explain the warmth with which she had reproved him for his aimless way of life. Why should his way of life so deeply concern her, unless . . . unless . . . In certain things she had said there had been a significance that seemed perfectly clear to him, though it had not lain upon the surface of the spoken words. Why had she questioned him so inquisitorially? Why had she desired to know if he had formed any new lines of attachment? That indirect reference to her own unfortunate marriage? And then — though she explained it lightly — had she not worn his boyish gift on her bosom through all those years? The suggestion that they should return home on the same steamer contained in itself a whole

little drama of likelihoods. What if destiny had brought him and Rose together at last! He did not dare think of it; he did not dare acknowledge to himself that he wished it, though he knew he did.

Whitelaw was now standing in the centre of the contracted apartment, a few feet from his companion, and looking at her meditatively. The cloud was gone from his brow, and a soft light had come into the clear gray eyes. Her phrase curled itself cunningly about his heart — *on a l'âge de son cœur!* He was afraid to speak again, lest an uncontrollable impulse should hurry him into speaking of his love; and that he felt would indeed be precipitate. But the silence which had followed his last remark was growing awkwardly long. He must break it with some platitude, if he could summon one.

"Now that my anatomization is ended," he said tentatively, "is it not your turn, Rose? I have made a poor showing, as I warned you I should."

"My life has been fuller than yours," she returned, bending her eyes upon him seriously, "and richer. I have had such duties and pleasures as fall to most women, and such sorrow as falls to many. . . . I have lost a child."

The pathos of the simple words smote Whitelaw to the heart.

"I — I had not heard," he faltered; and a feeling of infinite tenderness for her came over him. If he had dared he would have gone to Rose and put his arm around her; but he did not dare. He stood riveted to the marble floor, gazing at her mutely.

"I did not mean to refer to that," she said, looking up, with a lingering dimness in the purple lashes. "No, don't let us talk any more of the past. Speak to me of something else, please."

"The future," said Whitelaw; "that can give us no pain — until it comes, and is gone. What are your plans for the summer?"

"We shall travel. I want Richard to see as much as he can before he is tied down to his studies, poor fellow!"

"Where do you intend to leave him at school?" inquired Whitelaw, with a quite recent interest in Richard.

"At Heidelberg or Leipsic — it is not decided."

"And meanwhile what's to be your route of travel?"

"We shall go to Sweden and Norway, and perhaps to Russia. I don't know why, but it has been one of the dreams of my life to see the great fair at Nijnii-Novgorod."

"It is worth seeing," said Whitelaw.

"It will be at its height in August — a convenient time for us. We could scarcely expect to reach St. Petersburg before August."

"I have just returned from Russia," he said, "after three years of it."

"Then you can give me some suggestions."

"Travelling there has numerous drawbacks unless one knows the language. French, which serves everywhere in Western Europe, is nearly useless in the majority of places. All educated Russians of course speak French or German; but railroad-guards and drosky-drivers, and the persons with whom the mere tourist is brought most in contact, know only Russian."

"But we've an excellent courier," rejoined Rose, "who speaks all the tongues of Babel. His English is something superb."

"When do you start northward?" asked Whitelaw, turning on her quickly, with a sudden subtile prescience of defeated purpose.

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow!" he echoed, in consternation. "Then I am to see nothing of you!"

"If you've no engagement for to-night, come to the hotel. I should be very glad to" —

"Where are you staying?"

"At the United States, on the Chiatamone, like true patriots."

"I have no engagement," said Whitelaw bewilderedly.

Rose to leave Naples to-morrow! That was a death-blow to all his plans — the excursions in the environs, and all! She was slipping through his fingers again . . . he was losing her forever! There was no time for temporizing or hesitation. He must never speak, or speak now. Perhaps it would not seem abrupt or even strange to her. If so, Rose should remember that his position as a lover was exceptional — he had done his wooing fifteen years before! He confessed to himself — and he had often confessed it to that same severe critic of manners — that possibly his wooing had been somewhat lacking in dash and persistence then. But to-day he would win her, as he might perhaps have won her years ago, if he had not been infirm of purpose, or pigeon-livered, or too proud — which was it? He had let a single word repulse him, when the chances were he might have carried her by storm, or taken her by siege. How young he must have seemed, even in her young eyes! Now he had experience and knowledge of the world, and would not be denied. The doubts and misgivings that had clouded his mind for the last quarter of an hour were blown away like meadow-mists at sunrise. At last he saw

clearly. He loved Rose — he had never really loved her until this moment! For other men there were other methods; there was but one course for him. No; he would not go to the hotel that night — as a suitor. His fate should be sealed then and there in the chapel of the Seripandis.

Whitelaw straightened himself, wavering for an instant, like a foresail when it loses the wind; then he crossed the narrow strip of tessellated pavement that lay between him and Rose, and stood directly in front of her.

"Rose," he said, and there was a strange pallor creeping into his cheeks, "there have been two miracles wrought in this church today. It is not only St. Januarius who has, in a manner, come to life again. I, too, have come to life. I have returned once more to the world of living men and women. Do not send me back! Let *me* take you and your boy to Russia, Rose!"

Rose gave a start, and cast a swift, horrified look at Whitelaw's face.

"Marc!" she cried, convulsively grasping the wrist of the hand which he had held out to her, "is it possible you have n't heard — has no one told you — don't you *know* that I have married again" —

She stopped abruptly, and released his wrist.

A man in a frayed, well-brushed coat, with a courier's satchel depending from a strap over his shoulder, was standing outside the iron grille which separated the chapel from the main church.

"Madama," said the courier, as he respectfully approached through the gate, "it is ten o'clock. The Signor Schuyler and Master Richard are waiting with the carriage at the corner of the Strada dell' Antiogolia. They bade me inform Madama."

GOLIATH

It was raining — softly, fluently, persistently — raining as it rains on the afternoon of the morning when you hesitate a minute or two at the hat-stand, and finally decide not to take your umbrella down town with you. It was one of those fine rains — I am not praising it — which wet you to the skin in about four seconds. A sharp twenty-minutes' walk lay between my office in Court Street and my rooms in Huntington Avenue. I was standing meditatively in the doorway of the former establishment on the lookout for a hack or a herdic. An unusual number of these vehicles were hurrying in all directions, but as each approached within the arc of my observation the face of some fortunate occupant was visible through the blurred glass of the closed window.

Presently a coupé leisurely turned the corner, as if in search of a fare. I hailed the driver, and though he apparently took no notice of my gesture, the coupé slowed up and

stopped, or nearly stopped, at the curbstone directly in front of me. I dashed across the narrow sidewalk, pulled open the door, and stepped into the vehicle. As I did so, some one else on the opposite side performed the same evolution, and we stood motionless for an instant with the crowns of our hats glued together. Then we seated ourselves simultaneously, each by this token claiming the priority of possession.

"I beg your pardon, sir," I said, "but this is my carriage."

"I beg *your* pardon, sir," was the equally frigid reply; "the carriage is mine."

"I hailed the man from that doorway," I said, with firmness.

"And I hailed him from the crossing."

"But I signalled him first."

My companion disdained to respond to that statement, but settled himself back on the cushions as if he had resolved to spend the rest of his life there.

"We will leave it to the driver," I said.

The subject of this colloquy now twisted his body round on the dripping box, and shouted —

"Where to, gentlemen?"

I lowered the plate glass, and addressed him —

"There 's a mistake here. This gentleman and I both claim the coupé. Which of us first

called you?" But the driver "could n't tell t' other from which," as he expressed it. Having *two* fares inside, he of course had no wild desire to pronounce a decision that would necessarily cancel one of them.

The situation had reached this awkward phase when the intruder leaned forward and inquired, with a total change in his intonation —

"Are you not Mr. David Willis?"

"That is my name."

"I am Edwin Watson; we used to know each other slightly at college."

All along there had been something familiar to me in the man's face, but I had attributed it to the fact that I hated him enough at first sight to have known him intimately for ten years. Of course, after this, there was no further dispute about the carriage. Mr. Watson wanted to go to the Providence Station, which lay directly on the route to Huntington Avenue, and I was charmed to have his company. We fell into pleasant chat concerning the old Harvard days, and were surprised when the coupé drew up in front of the red-brick clock-tower of the station.

The acquaintance, thus renewed by chance, continued. Though we had resided six years in the same city, and had not met before, we were now continually meeting — at the club, at

the down-town restaurant where we lunched, at various houses where we visited in common. Mr. Watson was in the banking business; he had been married one or two years, and was living out of town, in what he called "a little box," on the slope of Blue Hill. He had once or twice invited me to run out to dine and spend the night with him, but some engagement or other disability had interfered. One evening, however, as we were playing billiards at the St. Botolph, I accepted his invitation for a certain Tuesday. Watson, who was having a vacation at the time, was not to accompany me from town, but was to meet me with his pony-cart at Green Lodge, a small flag-station on the Providence railroad, two or three miles from The Briers, the name of his place.

"I shall be proud to show you my wife," he said, "and the baby — and Goliath."

"Goliath?"

"That 's the dog," answered Watson, with a laugh. "You and Goliath ought to meet — David and Goliath!"

If Watson had mentioned the dog earlier in the conversation I might have shied at his hospitality. I may as well at once confess that I do not like dogs, and am afraid of them. Of some things I am not afraid; there have been occasions when my courage was not to be

doubted — for example, the night I secured the burglar in my dining-room, and held him until the police came; and notably the day I had an interview with a young bull in the middle of a pasture, where there was not so much as a burdock leaf to fly to; with my red-silk pocket-handkerchief I deployed him as coolly as if I had been a professional *matador*. I state these unadorned facts in no vainglorious mood. If that burglar had been a collie, or that bull a bull-terrier, I should have collapsed on the spot.

No man can be expected to be a hero in all directions. Doubtless Achilles himself had his secret little cowardice, if truth were known. That acknowledged vulnerable heel of his was perhaps not his only weak point. While I am thus covertly drawing a comparison between myself and Achilles, I will say that that same extreme sensitiveness of heel is also unhappily mine; for nothing so sends a chill into it, and thence along my vertebræ, as to have a strange dog come up sniffing behind me. Some inscrutable instinct has advised all strange dogs of my antipathy and pusillanimity.

> "The little dogs and all,
> Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me."

They sally forth from picturesque verandas and unsuspected hidings, to show their teeth as I

go by. In a spot where there is no dog, one will germinate if he happens to find out that I am to pass that way. Sometimes they follow me for miles. Strange dogs that wag their tails at other persons growl at me from over fences, and across vacant lots, and at street corners.

"So you keep a dog?" I remarked carelessly, as I dropped the spot-ball into a pocket.

"Yes," returned Watson. "What is a country-place without a dog?"

I said to myself, "I know what a country-place is *with* a dog; it's a place I should prefer to avoid."

But as I had accepted the invitation, and as Watson was to pick me up at Green Lodge station, and, presumably, see me safely into the house, I said no more.

Living as he did on a lonely road, and likely at any hour of the night to have a burglar or two drop in on him, it was proper that Watson should have a dog on the grounds. In any event he would have done so, for he had always had a maniacal passion for the canine race. I remember his keeping at Cambridge a bull-pup that was the terror of the neighborhood. He had his rooms outside the college yard in order that he might reside with this fiend. A good mastiff or a good collie — if there are any good

collies and good mastiffs — is perhaps a necessity to exposed country-houses ; but what is the use of allowing him to lie around loose on the landscape, as is generally done ? He ought to be chained up until midnight. He should be taught to distinguish between a burglar and an inoffensive person passing along the highway with no intention of taking anything but the air. Men with a taste for dogs owe it to society not to cultivate dogs that have an indiscriminate taste for men.

The Tuesday on which I was to pass the night with Watson was a day simply packed with evil omens. The feathered cream at breakfast struck the keynote of the day's irritations. Everything went at cross-purposes in the office, and at the last moment a telegram imperatively demanding an answer nearly caused me to miss that six o'clock train — the only train that stopped at Green Lodge. There were two or three thousand other trains which did not stop there. I was in no frame of mind for rural pleasures when I finally seated myself in the "six o'clock accommodation" with my gripsack beside me.

The run from town to Green Lodge is about twenty-five minutes, and the last stoppage before reaching that station is at Readville. We were possibly half-way between these two

points when the train slackened and came to a dead halt amid some ragged woodland. Heads were instantly thrust out of the windows right and left, and everybody's face was an interrogation. Presently a brakeman, with a small red flag in his hand, stationed himself some two hundred yards in the rear of the train, in order to prevent the evening express from telescoping us. Then our engine sullenly detached itself from the tender, and disappeared. What had happened? An overturned gravel-car lay across the track a quarter of a mile beyond. It was fully an hour before the obstruction was removed, and our engine had backed down again to its coupling. I smiled bitterly, thinking of Watson and his dinner.

The station at Green Lodge consists of a low platform upon which is a shed covered on three sides with unpainted deal boards hacked nearly to pieces by tramps. In autumn and winter the wind here, sweeping across the wide Neponset marshes, must be cruel. That is probably why the tramps have destroyed their only decent shelter between Readville and Canton. On this evening in early June, as I stepped upon the platform, the air was merely a ripple and a murmur among the maples and willows.

I looked around for Watson and the pony-

cart. What had occurred was obvious. He had waited an hour for me, and then driven home with the conviction that the train must have passed before he got there, and that I, for some reason, had failed to come on it. The capsized gravel-car was an episode of which he could have known nothing.

A walk of three miles was not an inspiriting prospect, and would not have been even if I had had some slight idea of where The Briers was, or where I was myself. At one side of the shed, and crossing the track at right angles, ran a straight, narrow road that quickly lost itself in an arbor of swamp-willows. Beyond the tree-tops rose the serrated line of the Blue Hills, now touched with the twilight's tenderest amethyst. Over there, in that direction somewhere, lay Watson's domicile.

"What I ought to have done to-day," I reflected, "was to stay in bed. This is one of the days when I am unfitted to move among my fellow-men, and cope with the complexities of existence."

Just then my ear caught the sound of a cart-wheel grating on an unoiled axle. It was a withered farmer in a rickety open wagon slowly approaching the railroad track, and going toward the hills — my own intended destination. I stopped the man and explained my dilemma.

He was willing, after a suspicious inventory of my person, to give me a lift to the end of the Green Lodge road. There I could take the old turnpike. He believed that the Watson place was half a mile or so down the turnpike toward Milton way. I climbed up beside him with alacrity.

Beyond giving vent to a sneeze or two left over from the previous winter, the old man made no sign of life as we drove along. He seemed to be in a state of suspended animation. I was as little disposed to talk.

It was a balmy evening, the air was charged with sweet wood-scents, and here and there a star half opened an eyelid on the peaceful dusk. After the frets of the day, it was soothing thus to be drawn at a snail's pace through the fragrance and stillness of that fern-fringed road, with the night weaving and unweaving its mysteries of light and shade on either side. Now and then the twitter of an oriole in some pendent nest overhead added, as it were, to the silence. I was yielding myself up wholly to the glamour of the time and place, when suddenly I thought of Goliath. At that moment Goliath was probably prowling about Watson's front yard seeking whom he might devour ; and I was that predestined nourishment.

I knew what sort of watch-dog Watson would

be likely to keep. There was a tough streak in Watson himself, a kind of thoroughbred obstinacy — the way he had held on to that coupé months before illustrated it. An animal with a tenacious grip, and on the verge of hydrophobia, was what would naturally commend itself to his liking. He had specified Goliath, but may be he had half a dozen other dragons to guard his hillside Hesperides. I had depended on Watson meeting me at the station, and now, when I was no longer expected, I was forced to invade his premises in the darkness of the night, and run the risk of being torn limb from limb before I could make myself known to the family. I recalled Watson's inane remark, "You and Goliath ought to meet — David and Goliath!" It now struck me as a most unseemly and heartless pleasantry.

These reflections were not calculated to heighten my enjoyment of the beauties of nature. The gathering darkness, with its few large, liquid stars, which a moment before had seemed so poetical, began to fill me with apprehension. In the daylight one has resources, but what on earth was I going to do in the dark with Goliath, and, likely enough, a couple of bloodhounds at my throat? I wished myself safely back among the crowded streets and electric lights of the city. In a few minutes

more I was to be left alone and defenceless on a dismal highway.

When we reached the junction of the Green Lodge road and the turnpike, I felt that I was parting from the only friend I had in the world. The man had not spoken two words during the drive, and now rather gruffly refused my proffered half-dollar; but I would have gone home with him if he had asked me. I hinted that it would be much to his pecuniary advantage if he were willing to go so far out of his course as the door-step of Mr. Watson's house; but either because wealth had no charms for him, or because he had failed to understand my proposition, he made no answer, and, giving his mare a slap with the ends of the reins, rattled off into space.

On turning into the main road I left behind me a cluster of twinkling lights emitted from some dozen or twenty little cottages, which, as I have since been told, constitute the village of Ponkapog. It was apparently alive with dogs. I heard them going off, one after another, like a string of Chinese crackers, as the ancient farmer with his creaking axle passed on through the village. I was not reluctant to leave so alert a neighborhood, whatever destiny awaited me beyond.

Fifteen or twenty minutes later I stood in

front of what I knew at a glance to be The Briers, for Watson had described it to me. The three sharp gables of his description had not quite melted into the blackness which was rapidly absorbing every object; and there too, but indistinct, were the twin stone gate-posts with the cheerful Grecian vases on top, like the entrance to a cemetery.

I cautiously approached the paling and looked over into the enclosure. It was gloomy with shrubbery, dwarf spruces, and Norway pines, and needed nothing but a few obelisks and lachrymal urns to complete the illusion. In the centre of the space rose a circular mound of several yards in diameter, piled with rocks, on which probably were mosses and nasturtiums. It was too dark to distinguish anything clearly; even the white gravel walk encircling the mound left one in doubt. The house stood well back on a slight elevation, with two or three steps leading down from the piazza to this walk. Here and there a strong light illumined a lattice-window. I particularly noticed one on the ground floor in an ell of the building, a wide window with diamond-shaped panes — the dining-room. The curtains were looped back, and I could see the pretty housemaid in her cap coming and going. She was removing the dinner things: she must have long ago taken away *my* unused plate.

The contrast between a brilliantly lighted, luxurious interior and the bleak night outside is a contrast that never appeals to me in vain. I seldom have any sympathy for the outcast in sentimental fiction until the inevitable moment when the author plants her against the area-railing under the windows of the paternal mansion. I like to have this happen on an inclement Christmas or Thanksgiving eve — and it always does.

But even on a pleasant evening in early June it is not agreeable to find one's self excluded from the family circle, especially when one has travelled fifteen miles to get there. I regarded the inviting façade of Watson's villa, and then I contemplated the sombre and unexplored tract of land which I must needs traverse in order to reach the door-step. How still it was! The very stillness had a sort of menace in it. My imagination peopled those black interstices under the trees with "gorgons and hydras and chimæras dire." There certainly was an air of latent dog about the place, though as yet no dog had developed. However, unless I desired to rouse the inmates from their beds, I saw that I ought to announce myself without much further delay. I softly opened the gate, which, having a heavy ball-and-chain attachment, immediately slipped from my hand and slammed to with a bang as I stepped within.

I was not surprised, but I was paralyzed all the same, at instantly hearing the familiar sound of a watch-dog suddenly rushing from his kennel. The kennel in this instance was on a piazza: a convenient arrangement — for the dog — in case of visitors.

The next sound I heard was the scrabble of the animal's four paws as he landed on the gravelled pathway. There he hesitated, irresolute, as if he were making up his diabolical mind which side of the mound he would take. He neither growled nor barked in the interim, being evidently one of those wide-mouthed, reticent brutes that mean business and indulge in no vain flourish.

I held my breath, and waited. Presently I heard him stealthily approaching me on the left. I at once hastened up the right-hand path, having tossed my gripsack in his direction, with the hope that while he was engaged in tearing it to pieces, I might possibly be able to reach the piazza and ring the door-bell.

My ruse failed, however, and the gripsack, which might have served as a weapon of defence, had been sacrificed. The dog continued his systematic approach, and I was obliged to hurry past the piazza-steps. A few seconds brought me back to the point of my departure. Superficially considered, the garden-gate, which

now lay at my hand, offered a facile mode of escape; but I was ignorant of the fastenings; I had forgotten which way it swung; besides, it was unfortunately necessary that I should continue on my circular journey.

So far as I could judge, the dog was now about three yards in my rear; I was unable to see him, but I could plainly detect his quick respiration, and his deliberate footfalls on the gravel. I wondered why he did not spring upon me at once; but he knew he had his prey, he knew I was afraid of him, and he was playing with me as a cat plays with a mouse. In certain animals there is a refinement of cruelty which sometimes makes them seem almost human. If I believed in the transmigration of souls, I should say that the spirit of Caligula had passed into dogs, and that of Cleopatra into cats.

It is easily conceivable that I made no such reflection at the moment, for by this time my brisk trot had turned into a run, and I was spinning around the circle at the rate of ten miles an hour, with the dog at my heels. Now I shot by the piazza, and now past the gate, until presently I ceased to know which was the gate and which the piazza. I believe that I shouted "Watson!" once or twice, no doubt at the wrong place, but I do not remember. At all

events, I failed to make myself heard. My brain was in such confusion that at intervals I could not for the soul of me tell whether I was chasing the dog, or the dog was chasing me. Now I almost felt his nose at my heel, and now I seemed upon the point of trampling him underfoot.

My swift rotatory movement, combined with the dinner which I had not had, soon induced a sort of vertigo. It was a purely unreasoning instinct that prevented me from flying off at a tangent and plunging into the shrubbery. Strange lights began to come into my eyes, and in one of those phosphorescent gleams I saw a shapeless black object lying, or crouching, in my path. I automatically kicked it into the outer darkness. It was only my derby hat, which had fallen off on one of the previous trips.

I have spoken of the confused state of my mind. The right lobe of my brain had suspended all natural action, but with the other lobe I was enabled to speculate on the probable duration of my present career. In spite of my terror, an ironical smile crept to my lips as I reflected that I might perhaps keep this thing up until sunrise, unless a midnight meal was one of the dog's regular habits. A prolonged angry snarl now and then admonished me that his patience was about exhausted.

I had accomplished the circuit of the mound for the tenth — possibly the twentieth — time (I cannot be positive), when the front door of the villa was opened with a jerk, and Watson, closely followed by the pretty housemaid, stepped out upon the piazza. He held in his hand a German student-lamp, which he came within an ace of dropping as the light fell upon my countenance.

"Good heavens! Willis; is this you? Where did you tumble from? What 's become of your hat? How did you get *here?*"

"Six o'clock train — Green Lodge — white horse — old man — I" —

Suddenly the pretty housemaid descended the steps and picked up from the gravelled path a little panting, tremulous wad of something — not more than two handfuls at most — which she folded tenderly to her bosom.

"What 's that?" I asked.

"That 's Goliath," said Watson.

THE CHEVALIER DE RESSEGUIER

I

I AM unable to explain the impulse that prompted me to purchase it. I had no use for a skull — excepting, of course, the one I am temporarily occupying. There have been moments, indeed, when even that has seemed to me an encumbrance. Nevertheless, I bought another.

It was one of three specimens which decorated the window of a queer bookshop that I was in the habit of passing in my daily walks between the railroad station and the office of the Æsthetic Review. I was then living out of town. I call it a queer bookshop, for it was just that. It dealt in none but works on phrenology, toxicology, evolution, mesmerism, spiritualism, and kindred occult sciences. Against the door-jambs, and on some shelves outside, were piled small packages of quaintly bound

volumes, each set tied up with a piece of frayed twine, and bearing a tag on which was written the title of the work. These thin, dingy octavos and twelvemos, looking as if they might have come out of some mediæval library, were chiefly treatises of a psychical and social nature, and were no doubt daringly speculative. The patrons of the establishment shared its eccentricity. Now and then I caught sight of a customer either entering or leaving the shop. Sometimes it was a half-shabby middle-aged man, who seemed a cross between a low comedian and a village undertaker; sometimes it was a German or a Pole, cadaverous, heavy-bearded, with a restlessness about the eyes — a fellow that might be suspected of carrying dynamite pellets in his waistcoat pocket; and sometimes it was an elderly female, severe of aspect, with short hair in dry autumnal curls, evidently a person with advanced views on Man, and so flat in figure, so wholly denuded of graceful feminine curves, as to make it difficult for one to determine, when she lingered an instant in the doorway, whether she was going in or coming out.

What first attracted my attention to the shop-window was a plaster bust of the Young Augustus, for which a copy of Malthus on The Principle of Population served as pedes-

tal. The cranium had been neatly marked out into irregular, variously colored sections, like a map of the United States. In each section was a Roman numeral, probably having its duplicate with an attendant explanation in the phrenological chart which lay in front of the bust. That first caught my eye; but the object which touched my real interest, and held it, was what I took to be a skilful imitation of the human skull, carved in rich old ivory. It struck me as a consummate little piece of sculpture, and I admired it greatly. After closer and repeated scrutiny, however, I discovered that it was not a reproduction, but the genuine article; yet I could never wholly divest myself of its first impression as a work of art. A work of art, indeed! It was one of a kind on which patient Nature has lavished some of her most exquisite handicraft. What inanimate object on earth so appeals to the imagination as a skull, the deserted "dome of thought, the palace of the soul," as Byron called it? Reverently regarded, there is nothing depressing or repellent in it. That is a false and morbid sentimentalism which sees in such relics anything but a solemn and beautiful mystery.

There were, as I have said, two other specimens in the window, but the one signalized was incomparably the finest. I seldom passed near

the shop without halting a moment to contemplate the wide, placid brows, in which there was a beauty of even a finer kind than that in the face of the Young Augustus, in spite of the latter having all the advantage of completed features. The skull was apparently very old — say a hundred years or so, if that is old for a skull; and had clearly belonged to a man past the prime of life at the instant of his quitting it. It was a curious reflection that while time had ceased for the man himself, the inexorable years were surely, though slowly and imperceptibly, working their will on what was once so intimate a part of him, the cast-off shell of his mind!

Passing the shop day after day through those summer months, I finally became, if the phrase is permissible, on familiar terms with the skull. As I approached it morning and evening, on my passage to and fro, it grew to seem to me like the face of a friend in the crowd — a face that I should have missed if it had been absent. Once or twice as the declining sun chanced momentarily to light up the polished marble brows, I almost fancied that I detected a gleam of recognition on the part of the mask. It had such an air of shrewdness as it looked out on the busy life of the street! "What," I said to myself one evening — "what if by any pos-

sibility it has some dim perception of the fret and fever of it all — if some little flickering spark of consciousness still lingers!"

The idea, fanciful and illogical as it was, suggested itself to my mind from time to time, and one afternoon the pathos of it thrilled me strangely. I had a swift desire to take possession of the skull, and give it decent sepulture somewhere, though that would have been no kindly service if it were a sentient thing. At any rate, I resolved to shelter it from further publicity, and a moment afterward I found myself inside the old bookshop, and in close commercial relations with the proprietor, a moist-eyed but otherwise desiccated little man, whose *pince-nez*, attached by an elastic cord and set at an acute angle on his nose, was continually dropping into his shirt-bosom. There was something in the softness of his voice and the meekness of his manner out of all keeping with the revolutionary and explosive literature amid which he passed his existence.

"No," he said gently, in reply to a question I had put to him; "I cannot say whose it was. Of course," he added, with a feeble smile that had something of the pensiveness of a sigh, "it must have belonged to some one in particular; such things are not generally in common."

"I quite understand that," I returned. "I merely thought it might possibly have some sort of pedigree. Have you any idea how old it is?"

"There, too, I am in the dark," he replied deprecatingly. "It stood in the shop-window when I came here as a boy, somewhat more than fifty years ago. I distinctly remember upsetting it the very first morning I swept out the store. Where old Mr. Waldron got it — I succeeded to the business in 1859; will you let me give you one of my cards? — and how long he had had it in stock, I am unable to state. It is in perfect preservation, you will observe, and a gentleman wanting anything in this line, either for a collection or as a single specimen, could scarcely do better."

As the ancient bookseller spoke, he held out the skull on his palm at arm's length, and regarded it critically, giving a little purring hum of admiration meanwhile. I straightway thought of the grave-digger in the churchyard at Elsinore, and inwardly repeated Hamlet's comment: "Hath this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?"

I was without definite views concerning the current prices of the merchandise I was about to purchase, but supposed that they ran rather high. I was astonished by the smallness of

the sum named for the skull — a sum at which I should hesitate to part with my own, unless it were in some acute crisis of neuralgic headache.

The transaction concluded, I had an instant's embarrassment. "Could n't you wrap this in something?" I said.

"Certainly, to be sure!" exclaimed the little man, fishing up his eye-glasses for the twentieth time from the deep sea of his shirt-bosom. "Perhaps you would like it sent? If you will give me your address" —

"No, thanks. I live out of town. I will take it with me."

"Ah, quite so," he said, and, retiring to an inner room, presently returned with the skull neatly wrapped in a sheet or two of pink tissue-paper.

I put it under my arm, and passed into the street, trying to throw into my countenance the expression of a man who is carrying home a melon. I succeeded so far in this duplicity as to impose on my wife, who, meeting me on the piazza of our little country-house, gayly snatched the package from my hand, and remarked —

"We will have it for dinner, dear!"

We both were smiling as we entered the house. In the meanwhile she was peeling off the layers of tissue-paper.

"But it is n't a melon!" cried my wife, hastily laying the package on the hall table.

"No, dear," I said; "it 's a skull."

"A skull? How dreadful! Where did you get it? Whose skull?"

"It is mine — so far as such property can be — for I bought it. It is more distinctly mine than the one I have, which I did n't buy and pay for, but which was thrown upon my hands, so to speak, without any regard to my personal wishes in the matter. This one I wanted."

"But, my dear, what possessed you? It is perfectly horrid!"

"It is perfectly beautiful, my love, and it has the highest moral significance. It is probable that the original wearer of it conveyed no such deep lesson to his contemporaries as this surviving framework of him may have for us. The wise Athenians always had a skull at their banquets, to remind them of the transitoriness and vanity of life. So, after all, we can have it for dinner, dear. Gazing upon this symbol of impermanence, you will no longer envy Mrs. Midas her coupé, and I shall feel that old Midas's balance at the bank is not worth having, and that his ponderous new granite château, which completely cuts off our view of the river, is a thing of shifting sand. As a literary critic

too much inclined, perhaps, to be severe on the shortcomings of fellow-creatures whose gifts are superior to mine, I need just such a *memento mori* to restrain my natural intolerance."

"How absurd! What do you mean to do with it?"

"I intend to put it on the faience bracket over the end window in the library."

"Is it entirely appropriate as an ornament, dear? Is n't it a trifle — ghostly?"

"It is decidedly appropriate. What are books themselves but the lingering shades of dead and gone historians, story-tellers, and poets? Every library is full of ghosts, the air is thick with them."

"I am sure Jane will give us warning the moment she lays eyes on it."

"Then Jane can retire with her own silly head-piece."

"It will certainly terrify little Alfred."

"If it prevents little Alfred from playing in the library during my absence, and breaking the amber mouth-pieces off my best pipes, I shall not complain. But, seriously, I set a value on this ancient relic — a value which I cannot easily make clear even to myself. In speaking of the matter I have drifted into a lighter vein than I intended. The thing will not be out of place among the books and *bric-à-*

brac in the library, where no one spends much time, excepting myself; so, like a good girl, say no more about it."

The question thus pleasantly settled itself. I had scarcely installed my singular acquisition on the bracket when I was called to dinner. I paused a moment or two with my hand on the knob of the library door to take in the general effect from that point of view. The skull, which in widely different surroundings had become a familiar object to me, adapted itself admirably to its new *milieu*. There was nothing incongruous or recent in its aspect; it seemed always to have stood just there, though the bracket had for years been occupied by a slender Venetian vase, a bit of Salviati's fragile workmanship, which only a few days previously had been blown from its stand by a draught caused by the sudden opening of the door.

"Yes," I said, "it will do very well. There's nothing like it to give a tone to a library."

II

"WILL you take your coffee here, or have it in the library?" asked my wife, while Jane was removing the remains of the dessert.

"In the library," I said; "and as soon as Jane can fetch it. I must finish that review to-night."

When I bought the small house, half villa, half chalet, called Redroof, I added a two-story extension containing a spacious study on the ground floor and a bedroom over it. As I frequently sat up late, and as Redroof was in a rather isolated situation, I liked to be within speaking-distance of my wife. By locking the doors of the upper and lower vestibules, which were connected by a staircase, we wholly separated ourselves from the main building. The library was a long low-studded apartment with three windows on each side, and at the end opposite the door a wide-mullioned lattice, with lead-set panes, overlooking a stretch of lonely meadows. The quiet and seclusion of the room made it an ideal spot for literary undertakings,

and here it was that I did the greater part of my work.

Now I had an important piece of work on hand this night, and after I had drunk my coffee I began turning over the leaves of a certain half-completed manuscript, with the despairing consciousness that I was not in a mood to go on with it. The article in question was a study of political intrigue during the reigns of Louis XV. and Louis XVI. The subject had fascinated me; for a week I had been unable to think of anything else, and the first part of the article had almost written itself. But now I found it impossible to pick up the threads of my essay. My mind refused concentration on any single point. A hundred things I wanted to say rushed upon me simultaneously, and so jostled and obscured one another as to create nothing but confusion. This congestion of ideas is quite as perplexing as their total absence, and the result is the same. I threw down my pen in disgust, and, placing one elbow on the desk, rested my cheek on my palm. I had remained in that attitude for perhaps three minutes when I heard a voice — a low but distinct voice — saying —

"I beg monsieur's pardon, but if I interrupt him" —

I instantly wheeled round in my chair, ex-

pecting to see some one standing on the Bokhara rug behind me, though in the very act of turning I reflected how nearly impossible it was that any visitor could have got into the library at that time of night. There was nobody visible. I glanced toward the door leading into the vestibule. It was unlikely that that door could have been opened and closed without my observing it.

"I beg monsieur's pardon," repeated the voice, "but I am here — on the bracket."

"Oh," I said to myself, "I am careering round on the wildest of nightmares — one that has never before had a saddle on her. Clearly this is the result of over-work." My next impression was that I was being made the victim of some ingenious practical joke. But no; the voice had incontestably issued from the little shelf above the window, and though the effect might have been accomplished by some acoustic contrivance, there was no one in the house or in the neighborhood capable of conceiving it. Since the thing was for the moment inexplicable, I decided to accept it on its own terms. Recovering my composure, and fixing my eyes steadily in the direction of the bracket, I said —

"Are you the person who just addressed me?"

"I am not a person, monsieur," replied the voice slowly, as if with difficulty at first, and with an unmistakable French accent; "I am merely a conscience, an intelligence imprisoned in this sphere. Formerly I was a person — a person of some slight distinction, if I may be permitted so much egotism. Possibly monsieur has heard of me — I am the Chevalier de Resseguier."

Mechanically I threw a sheet of blotting-paper over the last page of my manuscript. Not five minutes previously I had written the following sentence — the ink was still fresh on the words: *Among the other intimates of Madame du Barry at this period was an adventurer from Toulouse, a pseudo man-of-letters, a sort of prowling epigram — one Chevalier* DE RESSEGUIER!

I had never been a believer in spiritualistic manifestations, perhaps for the simple reason that I had never been fortunate enough to witness any. Hitherto all phenomena had sedulously avoided me; but here was a mystery that demanded consideration — something that was not to be explained away on the theory that my senses had deceived me, something that the Society for Psychical Research would have been glad to get hold of. I found myself for once face to face with the Unusual, and I

did not mean to allow it to daunt me. What is seemingly supernatural, is not always to be taken too seriously. The astrology of one age becomes the astronomy of the next; the magician disappears in the scientist. Perhaps it was an immense curiosity rather than any spirit of scientific investigation that gave steadiness to my nerves; for I was now as cool and collected as if a neighbor had dropped in to spend an hour with me. I placed the German student-lamp further back on the desk, crossed my legs, and settled myself comfortably in the chair, like a person disposed to be sociable.

"Did I understand you to say," I asked with deliberation, "that you were the Chevalier de Resseguier?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"The Chevalier de Resseguier whom Madame de Pompadour once sent to the Bastille for writing a certain vivacious quatrain?"

"Ah, monsieur knows me! I was certain of it!"

"The Chevalier de Resseguier who fluttered round the Du Barry at the time of her début, and later on figures in one or two chapters of her lively Mémoires?"

"What! did the fair Jeannette give her Mémoires to the world, and do I figure in them? Well, well! She had many talents, *la*

belle Du Barry ; she was of a cleverness! but I never suspected her of being a *bas bleu.* And so she wrote her Mémoires!"

"Were you not aware of it?"

"Alas, monsieur, I know of nothing that has happened since that fatal July morning in '93 when M. Sanson — it was on the Place Louis Quinze — *chut!* and all was over."

"You mean you were" —

"Guillotined? *Certainement!* — thanks to M. Fouquier-Tinville. At that epoch everybody of any distinction passed through the hands of the *exécuteur des hautes œuvres* — a polite euphuism, monsieur. They were regenerating society in France by cutting off the only heads that had any brains in them. Ah, monsieur, though some few of us may not have known how to live, nearly all of us knew how to die!"

Though this De Resseguier had been in his time a rascal of the first water — I had it down in black and white in my historical memoranda — there certainly was about him something of that chivalric dash, that ornateness of manner, that delightful insouciance which we associate with the *XVIII^e siècle.* This air of high-breeding was no doubt specious, a thing picked up at the gateway of that gilded society which his birth and condition prevented him from entering. The De Choiseuls, the De Maupeous, the

D'Aiguillons — they were not for him. But he had breathed in a rich literary atmosphere, perhaps had spoken with Beaumarchais, or Rousseau, or Marmontel, or Diderot — at least he had seen them. He had known his Paris well, that Paris which had a *mot* and a laugh on its lip until the glittering knife fell. He had witnessed the assembling of the États Généraux; had listened to Camille Desmoulins haranguing the populace from his green table in the garden of the Palais Royal; had gazed upon Citizen Marat lying in state at the Pantheon; and had watched poor Louis Capet climb the scaffold stairs. Was he not "a mine of memories," this Chevalier de Resseguier? If the chevalier had had a grain of honesty in him, I might have secured fresh and precious material for my essay — some unedited fact, some hitherto unused tint of local color; but I had his measure, and he was not to be trusted. So I attempted nothing of the sort, though the opportunity of interrogating him on certain points was alluring.

The silence which followed the chevalier's last remark was broken by myself.

"Chevalier," I said, "it is with great hesitation that I broach so delicate a matter, but your mention of M. Sanson recalls to my mind the controversy that raged among physiologists, at the close of the Reign of Terror, on a ques-

tion similar to the one which is at this moment occupying our electricians. It was held by the eminent Dr. Süe that decapitation involved prolonged and exquisite suffering, while the equally eminent Dr. Sédillot contended that pain was simply impossible, an opinion which was sustained by the learned Gastellier. Will you, Chevalier, for the sake of science, pardon me if I ask you — was it quite painless?"

"M. le docteur Sédillot was correct, monsieur. Imagine a sensation a thousand times swifter than the swiftest thought, and monsieur has it."

"What followed then?"

"Darkness and sleep."

"For how long, Chevalier?"

"An hour — a month — a year — what know I?"

"And then" —

"A glimmering light, consciousness, the past a vivid reality, the present almost a blur. *Voilà tout!*"

"In effect, Chevalier, you had left the world behind you, taking with you nothing but your personal memories — a light luggage, after all! As you are unfamiliar with everything that has occurred since that July morning, possibly it may interest you to learn that on December 7, 1793 — five months subsequent to your own

departure — the Comtesse du Barry was summoned before the Tribunal Révolutionnaire, and the next day" —

"She, too — *la pauvre petite!* I can fancy her not liking that at all."

"Indeed, Chevalier, the countess showed but faltering fortitude on this occasion. It is reported that she cried, '*Grâce, monsieur le bourreau; encore un moment!*' It was not for such as she to mount the scaffold with the tread of a Charlotte Corday."

"*Ma foi, non!* She was a frank *coquine*, when truth is said. But who is all bad? She was not treacherous like Félicité de Nesle, nor vindictive like the Duchesse de Châteauroux. There was not a spark of malice in her, monsieur. When it was easy for her to do so, the Du Barry never employed against her enemies — and she had many — those *lettres de cachet* which used to fly in flocks, like blackbirds, from the hand of Madame de Pompadour."

"It is creditable to your heart, Chevalier — or, rather, to your head — that you have a kindly word for Madame du Barry."

"To be sure she thrust her adorable arm up to the elbow in the treasure-chest of Louis *le bien-aimé*, but then she was generous. She patronized art — and sometimes literature. The painter and the sculptor did not go unpaid —

elle donnait à deux mains. Possibly monsieur has seen Pajou's bust of her? *Quel chef-d'œuvre!* And that portrait by Drouais — *le joli museau!*"

"I have seen the bust," I replied, glad to escape into the rarefied atmosphere of the arts; "it is in the Louvre at present, and, as you observe, a masterpiece. The Drouais portrait has not fallen in my way. There 's an engraving of it, I believe, in one of Paul de Saint-Victor's interesting volumes. Ah, yes, I forgot; he is not of your world. But how is it, Chevalier, that with your remarkable conversational power" —

"Monsieur is too flattering."

"How is it that you have not informed yourself concerning the progress of human events, and especially of the political, literary, and social changes that have taken place in France? Surely you have had opportunities rarely offered, I imagine, to one in your position. Now, at the bookshop where I — where I made your acquaintance, you might have interrogated many intelligent persons."

"Ah, that miserable *boutique!* and that superannuated vender of revolutionary pamphlets — an imbecile of imbeciles, monsieur! How could I have talked with him and his fellow-*crétins*, even if it had been possible! But it

was not possible. Monsieur is the only person to whom I have ever been able to communicate myself. A barrier of dense materialism has until now excluded me from such intercourse as monsieur suggests. I make my compliments to monsieur; he is *tout à fait spirituel!*"

"May I inquire, Chevalier," I said, after a moment of meditation, "if the mind, the vital spark, of all persons who pass through a certain inevitable experience takes final lodgment in the cranium? I begin then to comprehend why that part of the anatomy of man has been rendered almost indestructible."

"I am grieved that I cannot dispel the darkness enveloping monsieur's problem. Perhaps this disposition of the vital spark, as monsieur calls it, occurs only in the case of those persons who have made their exit under peculiar circumstances. I cannot say. Chance has doubtless brought me in contact with several persons of that class, but no sign of recognition has passed between us. As I understand it, monsieur, death is a transition state, like life itself, and leaves the mystery still unsolved. Outside of my own individual consciousness everything has been nearly a blank."

"Then, possibly, you don't know where you are at present?"

"I conjecture; I am far from positive, but

I think I am in the land of Benjamin Franklin."

"Well, yes; but I should say the late Benjamin Franklin, if I were you. It is many years since he was an active factor in our public affairs."

"I was not aware — my almost absolute seclusion — monsieur understands."

"In your retirement, Chevalier, you have missed much. Vast organic upheavals have occurred meanwhile; things that seemed to reach down to the bed-rock of permanence have been torn up by the roots. The impossible has become the commonplace. The whole surface of the earth has undergone a change, and nowhere have the changes been more radical and marvellous than in your own beloved France. Would you not like me briefly to indicate a few of them?"

"If monsieur will be so obliging."

"In the first place, you should know that Danton, Desmoulins, Robespierre, and the rest, each in his turn, fell into the hands of your old friend M. Sanson."

"*A la bonne heure!* I knew it would come to that. When France wanted to regenerate society she ought to have begun with the *sans culottes.*"

"The republic shortly gave way to a mon-

archy. A great soldier sat upon the throne, a new Cæsar, who flung down his gauntlet to the whole world, and well-nigh conquered it; but he too fell from his lofty height, suddenly, like Lucifer, never to rise again."

"And how did men call him?"

"Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Bonaparte? Bonaparte? — it is not a French name, monsieur."

"After him the Bourbon reigned; then there was a republic; and then another Cæsar came — an imitation Cæsar — who let a German king conquer France, and bivouac his Uhlans under the lime-trees in the Champs Elysées."

"A German with his foot upon the neck of France! Ah, monsieur, was I not happy to escape the knowledge of all these things? *Mon Dieu!* but he was a prophet, that Louis XV., with his '*Après nous le déluge!*' Tell me no more! I am well content to wait in ignorance."

"To wait for what, Chevalier?"

"For the end of the world, I suppose. Really, monsieur puts the most perplexing questions — like a *juge d'instruction.*"

I may here remark that throughout our conversation the immobility of the face of the Chevalier de Resseguier, taken in connection with what he was saying, had a grotesque effect. His moods were many, but his expres-

sion was one. Whether he spoke sadly, or playfully, or vehemently, there was that stolid, stony outline, gazing into vacancy like the face of a sphinx.

"But, Chevalier," I said, "it must be a monotonous business, this waiting."

"Yes, and no, monsieur. I am at least spared the tumult and struggle of earthly existence; for what is the life of man but *une milice continuelle?* Here I am safe from debts and the want of *louis d'or* to pay them; safe from false love, false friendship, and all hypocrisy. I am neither hot nor cold, neither hungry nor thirsty. *Parbleu!* monsieur, I might be much worse off."

"Yet at intervals your solitude must weigh upon you."

"Then I take a little nap of four or five years — four or five years according to monsieur's computation. The Gregorian calendar does not exist for me."

"Perhaps you feel like taking a little nap now," I suggested, with a sudden desire to be rid of him.

"Not at all," replied the chevalier briskly. "I never felt less like it."

"I am sorry, for it is really an embarrassing question, when I come to think of it, what I am to do with you."

"Monsieur is too kind to trouble himself

with thinking about it. Why do anything? How charming it all has been, except that Madame for an instant mistook me for a melon! We have our little vanities, *nous autres!* Here I find myself *au mieux.* I am a man of letters, a poet whose works have been crowned by the Bastille if not by the Académie. These volumes in polished calf and fragrant crushed levant make a congenial atmosphere, *n'est-ce pas?* Formerly my Greek and Latin were not of the best; but now, naturally, I speak both with fluency, for they are *dead* languages, as monsieur is aware. My English — monsieur can judge. I acquired it in London during a year or two when my presence in Paris was not absolutely indispensable. So why not let me remain where I am? *Un bel esprit* is never *de trop.* Monsieur need never more be in want of a pleasant companion. I will converse with him, I will dissipate his *ennui.* I am no longer of those who disappear abruptly. I will stay with monsieur forever."

This monstrous proposition struck me cold.

"No, Chevalier," I said, with as much calmness as I could command; "such an arrangement would not suit me in any particular. You have not read the Mémoires of Madame du Barry, and I have. Our views of life are antagonistic. The association you propose is wholly impracticable."

"I am here by monsieur's own invitation, am I not? Did I thrust myself upon him? No. Did I even seek his acquaintance? No. It was monsieur who made all the advances. There were three of us, and he selected me. I am deeply sensible of the honor. I would give expression to that sensibility. I would, if monsieur were disposed, render him important literary services. For example, I could furnish him with many curious particulars touching the Œil-de-Bœuf, together with some startling facts which establish beyond doubt the identity of the Man in the Iron Mask."

"Such information, unfortunately, would be of no use to me."

"Of no use? Monsieur astonishes me!"

"I could not avail myself of statements made by the Chevalier de Resseguier."

"Monsieur means" —

"Precisely what I say."

"But what monsieur says is not precisely clear. His words are capable of being construed as insulting. Under different circumstances, I should send two of my friends to demand of monsieur the satisfaction which one *galant homme* never refuses another."

"And you would get it!" I returned warmly.

"I could wish that I had monsieur for one little quarter of an hour in some shady avenue

at Versailles, or on the Terrasse des Feuillants in the garden of the Tuileries."

"I wish you had, and then you 'd wish you had n't, for I should give you a sound caning to add to your stock of permanent reminiscences."

"Monsieur forgets himself," said the chevalier, and the chevalier was quite right. "The rapier and the pistol are — or were — my weapons. Fortunately for monsieur I am obliged to say *were*. Monsieur can be impertinent with impunity."

"I 've a great mind to knock your head off!" I cried, again in the wrong.

"A work of supererogation. I beg leave to call monsieur's unintelligent attention to the fact that my head is already off."

"It 's a pity," I said, "that persons of your stripe cannot be guillotined two or three times. However, I can throw you out of the window."

"Throw me out of the window!" cried the Chevalier de Resseguier in a rage.

At that instant the door of the library was opened hurriedly, and a draught of wind, sweeping through the apartment, tumbled the insecurely placed skull from its perch.

"Do you know how late it is, dear?" said my wife, standing on the threshold, with a lace shawl drawn about her shoulders and her bare

feet thrust into a pair of Turkish slippers. "It is half past two. I verily believe you must have fallen asleep over your work!"

I stared for a moment at my wife, and made no reply. Then I picked up the Chevalier de Resseguier, who had sustained a double fracture of the jaw, and carefully replaced him, fragments and all, on the little faïence bracket over the window.

HER DYING WORDS

It was the good ship Agamenticus, five days out from New York, and bound for Liverpool. There was never a ship in a more pitiful plight.

On the Tuesday morning when she left Sandy Hook behind her, the sea had been nearly as smooth as an inland pond, and the sky one unbroken blue. What wind there was came in fitful puffs, and the captain began to be afraid that it would leave them altogether. Toward sunset, however, the breeze freshened smartly, and the vessel made a phenomenal run. On the following noon there was a falling barometer, the weather thickened, the sun went down in a purple blur, and by midnight the wind was blowing a gale. The next day the Agamenticus found herself rolling and plunging in the midst of one of those summer tempests which frequently can give points to their wintry accomplices. Captain Saltus, who had sailed the ocean for forty years, man and boy, had never experienced anything like that Thurs-

day night, unless it was that Friday night, when nothing but a series of miracles saved the ship from foundering.

On Saturday morning the storm was over. The sun was breaking gorgeously through a narrow bank of fog that stretched from east to west, and the sea was calming itself, sullenly and reluctantly, with occasional moans and spasms. The storm was over, but it had given the Agamenticus her death-blow. The dripping decks were cluttered with rope-ends, split blocks, broken stanchions, and pine splinters — the *débris* of the foremast, of which only some ten or twenty feet remained. Such canvas as had not been securely furled hung in shreds from the main and mizzen yards, and at every lurch of the ship the flying cordage aloft lashed the masts. Two life-boats, with the bottoms stove in, swung loosely from the davits on the port side; the starboard boats were gone. The same sea that had wrenched them from their fastenings had also swept away John Sharon, the first mate. But the climax of all these disasters was a dreadful leak, the exact location of which was hidden by the cargo.

Such was the plight of the good ship Agamenticus at sunrise, on that fifth day out from New York.

The Agamenticus was a merchantman of

about twelve hundred tons, and had excellent cabin accommodations, though she had been designed especially for freight. On this voyage, however, there happened to be five passengers — Mr. and Mrs. Livingston Tredick, Ellen Louise, their daughter, Dr. Newton Downs, and Miss Tredick's maid. The vessel belonged to a line running between Boston and New Orleans, and on the present occasion was making a chance trip to Liverpool.

Mr. Tredick was a wealthy retired merchant who was intending to pass the summer at the German baths with his wife and daughter, and had followed the advice of his family physician in selecting a sailing vessel instead of a steamer, in order that Mrs. Tredick, somewhat of an invalid, might get the benefit of a protracted sea voyage. Louise, the daughter, was a very beautiful girl of nineteen or twenty; and Dr. Downs was a young physician of great promise and few patients, who had willingly consented to be Mr. Tredick's guest as far as Liverpool. The air in which Miss Louise Tredick moved had been for two years or more the only air that this young scientist could breath without difficulty.

The relations existing between these two persons were of a rather unusual nature, and require a word or so of explanation.

At the time of his father's death, which occurred in 1879, Newton Downs was in his senior year at Bowdoin. The father had been a lawyer with an extensive practice and extravagant tastes, and his large annual income, easily acquired, had always been as easily disposed of. He was still in his prime, and was meditating future economies for the sake of his boy, when death placed an injunction on those plans. Young Downs was left with little more than sufficient means to enable him to finish his college course and pursue his medical studies for a year or two abroad. He then established himself professionally in New York; that is to say, he took a modest suite of rooms on a ground floor in West Eighteenth Street, and ornamented the right-hand side of the doorway with an engraved brass plate

Newton Downs, M. D.
Aurist.

The small, semi-detached boy whose duty it was to keep that brass tablet bright absorbed the whole of the doctor's fees for the first six months.

It was in the course of this tentative first half year that Dr. Downs made the acquaint-

ance of the Tredick family, and had definitely surrendered himself to the charm of Miss Tredick, before he discovered the fact — to him the fatal fact — that she was not only the daughter of a very wealthy father, but was very wealthy in her own right. In the eyes of most men these offences would not have seemed without mitigating circumstances; but to Dr. Downs, with his peculiar point of view, they were an insurmountable barrier. A young and impoverished gentleman, who had made a specialty of the human ear and could not get any hearing out of the public, was scarcely a brilliant *parti* for Miss Ellen Louise Tredick. His pride and his poverty, combined, closed that gate on Dr. Downs. If he could have been poor and not proud, perhaps it would have greatly simplified the situation.

"Since fate has set me penniless on the threshold of life," reflected the doctor, one evening shortly after his financial discovery, "why did not fate make a pauper of Miss Tredick? Then I could have asked her to be my wife, and faced the world dauntlessly, like thousands of others who have found love a sufficient capital to start housekeeping on. Miss Tredick's grandfather behaved like an idiot, to go and leave her such a preposterous fortune; and her own father is not behaving himself much

better. I wish the pair of them could lose their money. If Tredick only were a Wall Street magnate, there would be some chance of their going to pieces some fine day — then I might pick up one of the pieces!"

Unless he should become abruptly rich, or Mr. Tredick and his daughter abruptly poor, there really seemed no way out of it for the young doctor. As the months went by, neither of those things appeared likely to happen. So Newton Downs kept his love to himself, and looked with despairing eyes upon Miss Tredick as a glittering impossibility. It was the desire of the moth for the star, the longing of the dime to be a dollar.

Dr. Downs's unhappiness did not terminate here. There is no man at once so unselfish and selfish as a man in love. In this instance the moth, without the dimmest perception of its own ungenerosity, wanted the star to be a little unhappy also. There was no sacrifice, excepting that of his pride, which Dr. Downs would not have made for Miss Tredick; yet he found it very hard to have a hopeless passion all to himself, and that, clearly, was what he was having. He had no illusions concerning Miss Tredick's attitude toward him. It was one of intimate indifference. A girl does not treat a possible lover with unvarying simplicity

and directness. In all its phases love is complex; friendship is not. With other men Miss Tredick coquetted, or almost coquetted; but with him she never dropped that air of mere *camaraderie* which said as distinctly as such a disagreeable thing ought ever to be said, "Of course, between us *that* is out of the question. You cannot offer me the kind of home you would take me from, and I know you slightly, Dr. Downs, if you would be willing to accept rich surroundings at any woman's hand. I like you very much — in a way; and papa likes you very well, too. He sees that you are not at all sentimental." Times without number had Downs translated Miss Tredick's manner into these or similar phrases. He came at last to find a morbid satisfaction in such literary exercises.

Now, Newton Downs had been undergoing this experience for upward of two years, when Mr. Tredick, who appeared indeed to regard him as an exemplary and harmless young man, invited the doctor to take that trip to Liverpool on board the Agamenticus, and to spend a week in London or Paris, if he were so inclined, while the ship was getting ready for the return voyage.

The proposition nearly blinded Dr. Downs with its brilliancy. The cabin had been en-

gaged by Mr. Tredick, and there were to be no other passengers. There were four staterooms opening upon the saloon — the one occupied by the captain was to be given up to Dr. Downs. The tenor of Mr. Tredick's invitation left the young man no scruples about accepting it. Mr. Tredick had said: "On account of my wife and daughter, I should n't think of crossing without a medical man on board. I know how valuable a professional man's time is. The favor will be wholly on your side if I can persuade you to go with us." So Dr. Downs agreed to go. To have Miss Tredick all to himself, as it were, for eighteen or twenty days — perhaps twenty-five — was an incredible stroke of fortune. How it would grieve Mr. Cornelius Van Coot, the opulent stockbroker, and that young Delancy Duane, who had caused Newton Downs many an uneasy moment!

"If I am not to have earthly happiness with her," mused Dr. Downs, on his walk home that night from Madison Avenue, "I am to have at least some watery happiness! The dull season is coming on" — he smiled sarcastically as he thought of that — "and all my patients will have retired to their country-seats. Business will not suffer, and I shall escape July and August in town." Then he began making mental vignettes of Miss Tredick in a blue flannel

yachting suit, and gave her two small anchors, worked in gold braid, for the standing collar, and chevrons of the same for the left coat-sleeve. "How glorious it will be to promenade the deck in the moonlight after the old folks have turned in! I hope that they will be dreadfully ill, and that we shall keep dreadfully well. The moment we pass Sandy Hook Light, overboard goes Miss Tredick's maid! . . . What pleasure it will be to fetch her wraps, and black Hamburg grapes, and footstools, and iced lemonades — to sit with her under an awning, clear aft, with magazines and illustrated papers" — he instantly resolved to buy out Brentano — "to lean against the taffrail, and watch the long emerald sweep of the waves, and the sweep of Miss Tredick's eyelashes!"

It is to be remarked of Miss Tredick's eyelashes, that they were very long and very dark, and drooped upon a most healthful tint of cheek — neither too rosy nor too pallid — for she belonged to that later type of American girl who rides horseback and is not afraid of a five-mile walk through the woods and fields. There were great dignity, and delicacy, and strength in her tall figure; an innocent fearlessness in her clear, hazel eyes, and, close to, Miss Tredick's eyelashes were worth looking at. It was young Delancy Duane who said that it

took her half an hour every morning to disentangle them.

Dr. Downs sat up late that night at the open window of his office — it was in the middle of June — reflecting on the endless pleasant possibilities of the sea voyage. Would he go no further than Liverpool? or would he run up to London, and then over to Paris? In other days he had been very happy in Paris, in the old Latin Quarter. He sat there in the silent room, with no other light than his dreams.

They were not destined to be realized. That first day at sea promised everything; then came the rough weather, and then the terrible storm, which lasted thirty-six hours or more, and all but wrenched the Agamenticus asunder, leaving her on the fifth morning, as has been described, a helpless wreck in the middle of the Atlantic.

During the height of the tempest the passengers were imprisoned in the cabin, for it had been necessary to batten down the hatches. It was so dark below that the lamp suspended over the cabin table was kept constantly burning. The heavy seas on Thursday had put out the fire in the galley, which was afterward demolished, and the cook had retreated to some spot between decks, whence he managed to serve hot coffee and sandwiches to the saloon

at meal-times. Even this became nearly impracticable after Friday noon.

Mr. and Mrs. Tredick were permanently confined to their stateroom, and so desperately ill as to be for the most part unconscious of what was taking place. Miss Tredick's maid, who had been brought along chiefly to look after Mrs. Tredick, was in a like condition. Dr. Downs and Miss Tredick were fair sailors in ordinary weather; it was the strain on their nerves that now kept them "dreadfully well."

Neither thought of closing an eye that fearful Friday night. They passed the whole night in the saloon, seated opposite each other, with the narrow stationary table, which served as a support, between them. They exchanged scarcely a word as they sat listening to the thud of the tremendous waves that broke over the vessel. Indeed, most of the time speech would have been inaudible amid the roar of the wind, the shuffling tramp of the sailors on the deck, the creak of the strained timbers, and the hundred mysterious, half articulate cries that are wrung from the agony of a ship in a storm at sea.

Miss Tredick was very quiet and serious, but apparently not terrified. If an expression of anxiety now and then came into her face, it was when she glanced toward the stateroom

where her mother and father were. The door stood open, and Miss Tredick, by turning slightly in the chair, could see them in their berths. They were lying in a kind of lethargic sleep. Save for a touch of unwonted paleness, and certain traces of weariness about the eyes, Miss Tredick looked as she might have looked sitting, in some very serious mood, in her own room at home. This was courage pure and simple; for the girl was imaginative in a high degree, and it is the imagination that conspires to undermine one's firmness in critical moments. An unimaginative person's indifference to danger is not courage, it is obtuseness. Miss Tredick had the fullest realization of the peril they were in.

There was in her countenance this night a kind of spiritual beauty that seemed new to the young man. "I don't think she ever looked so much like herself before!" was Newton Downs's inward comment once, as he met her gaze across the narrow table. He could hardly keep his eyes away from her.

Dr. Downs's self-possession was not so absolute as Miss Tredick's. He was a brave man, as she was a brave girl, and the fears which unnerved him at intervals were not on his own account. To him his life weighed light in the balance against hers. That all this buoyant

womanhood and rare loveliness should be even remotely menaced with a cruel death was an intolerable thought. And the menace was not remote. There were moments when he wavered in his faith in the Divine goodness. There were moments, too, when he had it on his lips to tell Miss Tredick everything that had been in his mind those last two years. But here the old pride whispered to him. Later on, would it not seem as if he had taken advantage of a fortuitous situation to make avowals to which she could not well avoid listening?

It was some time near midnight that the foremast fell with a great crash. Miss Tredick involuntarily stretched out one of her hands to Downs.

"What was that?"

"A heavy spar, or a topmast, must have fallen," suggested Downs.

In the lull that followed they could hear what sounded like axe-strokes dealt in quick succession. The ship had heeled over frightfully to port. She held that position for perhaps twenty minutes, then slowly righted.

"It was one of the masts," Downs observed; "they have cut it adrift." And Miss Tredick softly withdrew her hand.

After this the lulls grew more frequent and

prolonged, and toward daybreak the storm began rapidly to abate. There was very much less motion, and the noises overhead had subsided. The ship's bell, which had made a muffled, intermittent clamor throughout the night, had now given over its tolling. This comparative stillness, succeeding the tumult, seemed to have a poignant quality in it. It was as if the whole world had suddenly stopped, like a clock. The vessel appeared to be making but slight headway. Presently the dawn whitened the stern ports and the little disks of opaque glass let into the deck, and Dr. Downs heard the men at work on the hatches. The long vigil was ended.

"Now go and lie down for an hour or so," he said, rising from the chair with his limbs cramped. "I 'll take a glance at the state of things above. I shall never forget this night, Miss Tredick."

"Nor I," she answered; and she looked so lovely sitting there in the twilight of the cabin, with an illuminated oval port behind her head forming a halo, that the young doctor faltered a second or two on the threshold.

At the top of the companion-way he met Captain Saltus on the point of descending. He was still in his oilskin reefer and overalls, and presented the appearance of a diver who

had just been brought exhausted to the surface.

"Good-morning, Captain!" cried Dr. Downs gayly, exhilarated by a full breath of the fresh sea air and a glimpse of the half-risen sun ploughing up opals and rubies in a low bank of fog stretching to the eastward. "We have weathered it, after all, but by Jove"— Something in the firm-set lines of the captain's mouth caused the doctor to leave his sentence unfinished. At the same instant a curious wailing sound reached his ear from the forward part of the ship. "What has happened?" he asked in a lower voice; for they were close to the companion-way, and the door at the foot of the stair stood open.

"I was just coming to tell you," replied the captain gravely, "you and Mr. Tredick."

"Is it anything serious?"

"Very serious, as serious as can be."

"They must n't hear us below. Come over by the rail. What is the matter — has anybody been hurt?"

"We 've all been hurt, Dr. Downs," returned the captain, drawing the back of one hand across his wet brows, "every soul of us! There 's an ugly leak somewhere below the water-line, we don't know where, and ain't likely to know, though the men are tearing up

the cargo trying to find out. Perhaps half a dozen seams have started, perhaps a plank. The thing widens. The ship is filling hand over hand, *and the pumps don't work.*"

"But surely the leak will be found!"

"Dr. Downs," said the captain, "the old Agamenticus has made her last cruise."

He said this very simply. He had faced death on almost every known sea, and from his boyhood had looked upon the ocean as his burial place. There he was to lie at last, with his ship, or in a shotted hammock, as the case might be. Such end had been his father's and his grandfather's before him, for he had come of a breed of sea kings.

"Then we shall have to take to the life-boats!" cried Downs, breaking from the stupor into which the captain's announcement had plunged him.

"Two of them were blown out of the lashings last night; the other two are over yonder."

Dr. Downs's glance followed the pointing of the captain's finger. Then the young man's chin sank on his breast. "At least we shall die together!" he said softly to himself.

"I don't know where we are," remarked the captain, casting his eyes over the lonely expanse of sea. "I've not been able to take an observation since Wednesday noon. It's pretty

certain that we 've been driven out of our course, but how far is guesswork. We 're not in the track of vessels, anyhow. I counted on sighting a sail at daybreak. It was our only hope, but it was n't to be. That 's a nasty bit of breeze off there to the east'ard," he added irrelevantly, following his habit of noting such detail. Then he recollected the business that had brought him to the cabin. "Some of the men for'ard are rigging up a raft; I don't myself set any great value on rafts, as a general thing, but I wish you 'd break the matter, kind of incidentally, to Mr. Tredick and the ladies, and tell them to get ready. There is n't too much time to lose, Dr. Downs!"

A figure glided from the companion-hatch, and passing swiftly by Dr. Downs halted at the captain's side.

"I have heard what you said, Captain Saltus" — Miss Tredick spoke slowly, but without any tremor in her voice — "and I am not frightened, you see. I want you to answer me one question."

"If I can, Miss Tredick."

"How long will it be before — before the end comes?"

"Well, miss, the wind has died away, and the sea is getting smoother every second. Mr. Bowlsby thinks he will be able to launch the

raft within three quarters of an hour. Then there 's the ship-stores " —

" Yes ! yes ! — but how long ? "

" Before we leave the ship, miss ? "

" No, before the ship sinks ! "

" That I can't say. She may keep afloat two or three hours, if the wind does n't freshen."

" And if the wind freshens ? "

" It would be lively work, miss."

" You are convinced, then, that we are irrevocably lost ? "

" Well," returned the captain, embarrassed by the unexpected composure of the girl, " I would never say that. There 's the raft. There is generally a chance of being picked up. Besides, we are always in God's world ! "

Miss Tredick bowed her head, and let her hand rest gently for an instant on the captain's coat-sleeve. In that touch was a furtive and pathetic farewell.

" Miss Tredick," cried the captain, as he lifted his cap respectfully, " damn me if I 'm not proud to sink with so brave a lady, and any man might well be ! You 're a lesson to those Portuguese, with their leaden images, caterwauling up there in the bows ! "

" Now I would like to speak a moment with Dr. Downs," said Miss Tredick half hesitatingly.

As the captain slowly walked forward among the crew, there was a dash of salt spray on his cheek. The girl paused, and looked after him with a quick, indescribable expression of tenderness in her eyes. Two intrepid souls, moving on diverse planes in this lower sphere, had met in one swift instant of recognition.

During the short dialogue between Captain Saltus and Miss Tredick, Newton Downs had stood leaning against the rail, a few feet distant. As he stood there he noticed that the ship was gradually settling. Until the night before, the idea of death — of death close to, immediate — had never come to him; it had been always something vague, a thing possible, perhaps certain, after years and years. It had been a very real thing to him that night in the storm, yet still indistinct so far as touched him personally; for his thoughts had been less of himself than of Miss Tredick. His thought now was wholly of her. What should be done? Would it not be better to go down in the vessel than to drift about the Atlantic for days and days on a fragile raft, and endure a thousand deaths? When he contemplated the possible horror of such brief reprieve, his heart turned cold. If it was decided to take to the raft, he would pray that another blow, such as the captain seemed to predict, might speedily come to

end their suffering. The captain himself had plainly resolved to sink with the ship. Would not that be the more merciful fate for all of them? Had not the thought occurred to Miss Tredick, too?

"Dr. Downs."

The young man raised his head, and saw Miss Tredick standing in front of him. There was a noticeable alteration in her manner; it lacked something of the self-possession it had had while she was addressing the captain, and her lips were nearly colorless. "Is she losing her splendid courage?" Downs asked himself, with a pang.

"There may not be another opportunity for me to speak with you alone," she said hurriedly, "here or on the raft. How cruel it all seems! The world we knew has suddenly and strangely come to an end for us. I could not say to you in that world what I wish to say to you now. You, too, did not speak your thoughts to me there, and the reason of your silence was unworthy of us both" — Dr. Downs gave a little start, and made a motion to interrupt her, but she stopped him with an imploring gesture. "No, you must listen, for these are my dying words. You were blind — oh, so blind! You did not see me as I was, you did not understand, for I think I loved you from that first

day" — then, with a piteous quiver of the lip, she added — "and I shall love you all the rest of my life!"

The young man's first impulse was to kneel at her feet, but the tall, slight figure was now drooping before him. He leaned forward, and took the girl in his arms. She rested her cheek on his shoulder, with her eyes closed. So they stood there, silently, in the red sunrise. Whether life lasted a minute or a century was all one to those two lovers on the sinking ship.

The hammering of the men at work on the raft had ceased, and the strange silence that fell upon the vessel was emphasized rather than broken by the intermittent lamentations of the Portuguese sailors crowded into the bow of the ship. Captain Saltus, with a curious expression in his face, leaned against the capstan, watching them.

Suddenly there was a rush of feet, followed by confused cries on the forecastle-deck; a man had shouted something, the import of which did not instantly reach the little group aft.

"Where away?" cried the second officer, leaping into the lower shrouds.

"On the starboard bow, sir! The fog's been hiding her."

"Where's the glass? — can you make her out?"

"I think it's an Inman liner, sir — she is signalling to us!"

"Thank God!"

"Remember — all the rest of your life," whispered Dr. Downs. "Those were your dying words!"

PÈRE ANTOINE'S DATE-PALM

NEAR the Levee, and not far from the old French cathedral in the Place d'Armes, at New Orleans, stands a fine date-palm, thirty feet in height, spreading its broad leaves in the alien air as hardily as if its sinuous roots were sucking strength from their native earth.

Sir Charles Lyell,[1] in his Second Visit to the United States, mentions this exotic: "The tree is seventy or eighty years old; for Père Antoine, a Roman Catholic priest, who died about twenty years ago, told Mr. Bringier that he planted it himself, when he was young. In his will he provided that they who succeeded to this lot of ground should forfeit it if they cut down the palm."

Wishing to learn something of Père Antoine's history, Sir Charles Lyell made inquiries among the ancient creole inhabitants of the faubourg. That the old priest, in his last days, became very much emaciated, that he walked about the streets like a mummy, that he grad-

[1] In 1846.

ually dried up, and finally blew away, was the meagre and unsatisfactory result of the tourist's investigations. This is all that is generally told of Père Antoine.

In the summer of 1861, while New Orleans was yet occupied by the Confederate forces, I met at Alexandria, in Virginia, a lady from Louisiana — Miss Blondeau by name — who gave me the substance of the following legend touching Père Antoine and his wonderful date-palm. If it should appear tame to the reader, it will be because I am not habited in a black ribbed-silk dress, with a strip of point-lace around my throat, like Miss Blondeau; it will be because I lack her eyes and lips and Southern music to tell it with.

When Père Antoine was a very young man, he had a friend whom he loved as he loved his life. Émile Jardin returned his passion, and the two, on account of their friendship, became the marvel of the city where they dwelt. One was never seen without the other; for they studied, walked, ate, and slept together.

Thus began Miss Blondeau, with the air of Fiammetta telling her prettiest story to the Florentines in the garden of Boccaccio.

Antoine and Émile were preparing to enter the Church; indeed, they had taken the pre-

liminary steps, when a circumstance occurred which changed the color of their lives. A foreign lady, from some nameless island in the Pacific, had a few months before moved into their neighborhood. The lady died suddenly, leaving a girl of sixteen or seventeen, entirely friendless and unprovided for. The young men had been kind to the woman during her illness, and at her death — melting with pity at the forlorn situation of Anglice, the daughter — swore between themselves to love and watch over her as if she were their sister.

Now Anglice had a wild, strange beauty that made other women seem tame beside her; and in the course of time the young men found themselves regarding their ward not so much like brothers as at first. In brief, they found themselves in love with her.

They struggled with their hopeless passion month after month, neither betraying his secret to the other; for the austere orders which they were about to assume precluded the idea of love and marriage. Until then they had dwelt in the calm air of religious meditations, unmoved except by that pious fervor which in other ages taught men to brave the tortures of the rack and to smile amid the flames. But a blonde girl, with great eyes and a voice like the soft notes of a vesper hymn, had come in

between them and their ascetic dreams of heaven. The ties that had bound the young men together snapped silently one by one. At last each read in the pale face of the other the story of his own despair.

And she? If Anglice shared their trouble, her face told no story. It was like the face of a saint on a cathedral window. Once, however, as she came suddenly upon the two men and overheard words that seemed to burn like fire on the lip of the speaker, her eyes grew luminous for an instant. Then she passed on, her face as immobile as before in its setting of wavy gold hair.

"Entre or et roux Dieu fit ses longs cheveux."

One night Émile and Anglice were missing. They had flown — but whither, nobody knew, and nobody, save Antoine, cared. It was a heavy blow to Antoine — for he had himself half resolved to confess his love to Anglice and urge her to fly with him.

A strip of paper slipped from a volume on Antoine's prie-dieu, and fluttered to his feet.

"*Do not be angry,*" said the bit of paper piteously; "*forgive us, for we love.*" (Pardonnez-nous, car nous nous aimons.)

Three years went by wearily enough. Antoine had entered the Church, and was already

looked upon as a rising man ; but his face was pale and his heart leaden, for there was no sweetness in life for him.

Four years had elapsed, when a letter, covered with outlandish postmarks, was brought to the young priest — a letter from Anglice. She was dying — would he forgive her? Émile, the year previous, had fallen a victim to the fever that raged on the island ; and their child, Anglice, was likely to follow him. In pitiful terms she begged Antoine to take charge of the child until she was old enough to enter the Convent of the Sacré-Cœur. The epistle was finished hastily by another hand, informing Antoine of Madame Jardin's death ; it also told him that Anglice had been placed on board a vessel shortly to leave the island for some Western port.

The letter, delayed by storm and shipwreck, was hardly read and wept over when little Anglice arrived.

On beholding her, Antoine uttered a cry of joy and surprise — she was so like the woman he had worshipped.

The passion that had been crowded down in his heart broke out and lavished its richness on this child, who was to him not only the Anglice of years ago, but his friend Émile Jardin also.

Anglice possessed the wild, strange beauty of her mother — the bending, willowy form, the rich tint of skin, the large tropical eyes, that had almost made Antoine's sacred robes a mockery to him.

For a month or two Anglice was wildly unhappy in her new home. She talked continually of the bright country where she was born, the fruits and flowers and blue skies, the tall, fan-like trees, and the streams that went murmuring through them to the sea. Antoine could not pacify her.

By and by she ceased to weep, and went about the cottage in a weary, disconsolate way that cut Antoine to the heart. A long-tailed paroquet, which she had brought with her in the ship, walked solemnly behind her from room to room, mutely pining, it seemed, for those heavy Orient airs that used to ruffle its brilliant plumage.

Before the year ended, he noticed that the ruddy tinge had faded from her cheek, that her eyes had grown languid, and her slight figure more willowy than ever.

A physician was consulted. He could discover nothing wrong with the child, except this fading and drooping. He failed to account for that. It was some vague disease of the mind, he said, beyond his skill.

So Anglice faded day after day. She seldom left the room now. At last Antoine could not shut out the fact that the child was passing away. He had learned to love her so!

"Dear heart," he said once, "what is 't ails thee?"

"Nothing, mon père," for so she called him.

The winter passed, the balmy spring had come with its magnolia blooms and orange blossoms, and Anglice appeared to revive. In her small bamboo chair, on the porch, she swayed to and fro in the fragrant breeze, with a peculiar undulating motion, like a graceful tree.

At times something seemed to weigh upon her mind. Antoine observed it, and waited. Finally she spoke.

"Near our house," said little Anglice — "near our house, on the island, the palm-trees are waving under the blue sky. Oh, how beautiful! I seem to lie beneath them all day long. I am very, very happy. I yearned for them so much that I grew ill — don't you think it was so, mon père?"

"Hélas, yes!" exclaimed Antoine suddenly. "Let us hasten to those pleasant islands where the palms are waving."

Anglice smiled.

"I am going there, mon père."

A week from that evening the wax candles burned at her feet and forehead, lighting her on the journey.

All was over. Now was Antoine's heart empty. Death, like another Émile, had stolen his new Anglice. He had nothing to do but to lay the blighted flower away.

Père Antoine made a shallow grave in his garden, and heaped the fresh brown mould over the child.

In the tranquil spring evenings, the priest was seen sitting by the mound, his finger closed in the unread breviary.

The summer broke on that sunny land; and in the cool morning twilight, and after nightfall, Antoine lingered by the grave. He could never be with it enough.

One morning he observed a delicate stem, with two curiously shaped emerald leaves, springing up from the centre of the mound. At first he merely noticed it casually; but presently the plant grew so tall, and was so strangely unlike anything he had ever seen before, that he examined it with care.

How straight and graceful and exquisite it was! In the twilight it seemed to Antoine as if little Anglice were standing there in the garden.

The days stole by, and Antoine tended the

fragile shoot, wondering what manner of blossom it would unfold, white, or scarlet, or golden. One Sunday, a stranger, with a bronzed, weather-beaten face like a sailor's, leaned over the garden rail, and said to him —

"What a fine young date-palm you have there, sir!"

"Mon Dieu!" cried Père Antoine starting, "and is it a palm?"

"Yes, indeed," returned the man. "I did n't reckon the tree would flourish like that in this latitude."

"Ah, mon Dieu!" was all the priest could say aloud; but he murmured to himself, "Bon Dieu, vous m'avez donné cela!"

If Père Antoine loved the tree before, he worshipped it now. He watered it, and nurtured it, and could have clasped it in his arms. Here were Émile and Anglice and the child, all in one!

The years glided away, and the date-palm and the priest grew together — only one became vigorous and the other feeble. Père Antoine had long passed the meridian of life. The tree was in its youth. It no longer stood in an isolated garden; for pretentious brick and stucco houses had clustered about Antoine's cottage. They looked down scowling on the humble thatched roof. The city was edging

up, trying to crowd him off his land. But he clung to it like lichen and refused to sell.

Speculators piled gold on his doorsteps, and he laughed at them. Sometimes he was hungry, and cold, and thinly clad; but he laughed none the less.

"Get thee behind me, Satan!" said the old priest's smile.

Père Antoine was very old now, scarcely able to walk; but he could sit under the pliant, spreading leaves of his palm, loving it like an Arab; and there he sat till the grimmest of speculators came to him. But even in death Père Antoine was faithful to his trust.

The owner of that land loses it if he injure the date-palm.

And there it stands in the narrow, dingy street, a beautiful, dreamy stranger, an exquisite foreign lady whose grace is a joy to the eye, the incense of whose breath makes the air enamored. May the hand wither that touches her ungently!

"*Because it grew from the heart of little Anglice*," said Miss Blondeau tenderly.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, U. S. A.
ELECTROTYPED AND PRINTED BY
H. O. HOUGHTON AND CO.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08709 168 0